

A IS FOR APPLE, B IS FOR BITE! → *The Alphabet Chef spells out that healthy eating can be fun and delicious.* PG. 110

MAY '25
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style.

2025
BUSINESS
WOMEN OF
STYLE

*Meet the influential women
shaping our community with
power and purpose.*

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

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PICTURE ^{of}
STRENGTH

*One woman gives the
gift of lasting memories
to first responders
facing cancer.*

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HEAVY
MEDAL

*The Leesburg Girls
Weightlifting
Team claims
victory once more!*

PG. 106

MARYCELL R. MABRY

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MAY'25
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STORY: CINDY PETERSON

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Lake & Sumter Style

Design: Michael Gualin
Photo: Nicole Hamel
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Village Edition

Design: Shawnee Coppola
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On the Cover: Douglas Colson
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

A Celebration of Women in Style and Success

Setting the gold standard in business.

Welcome to one of the most inspiring issues of the year! This month, it's all about celebrating the incredible impact of successful women in our community. We are thrilled to showcase our annual Businesswomen of *Style* feature, spotlighting over 35 pages of brilliant local women who are making waves in their industries, uplifting others and redefining what it means to lead with style, ambition and purpose. This edition is a tribute to the golden age of success, prosperity and health. The stories within these pages reflect resilience, innovation and drive. Each woman featured brings a unique perspective to her work and her world. And through their stories, you'll discover what motivates them, what sets them apart and the paths they've carved to reach new heights.

From entrepreneurs and executives to visionaries leading change, these women are proof that success comes in many forms, often fueled by passion, persistence and a commitment

to making a difference. Each profile offers a glimpse into the challenges they've overcome, and their moments of triumph.

At the heart of this issue is our *Style* Businesswoman of the Year, Marycell Mabry, with Independent Mobility Transport. Marycell is a shining example of purpose-driven leadership and determination. Her work fostering accessibility and empowering others has not only made her a business leader but also a community champion. Her story, like the others celebrated here, is one of vision and care that you won't want to miss.

Through this annual issue, we aim to uplift and connect you with the women shaping our community. Take the time to read about and be inspired by their journeys. Perhaps you'll even see reflections of your own aspirations in their stories.

Here's to the women who lead with style, who balance grace with grit and who motivate us all to dream bigger and achieve more.

Until next month,

Kendra



Have a story to tell?

We're always looking for stories about people who live and work in our area.
Send suggestions to editorial@akersmediagroup.com.

style

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What are the Skin Cancer Types?

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Basal cell carcinoma accounts for about 80 percent of skin cancers. It usually develops on the head and neck but can occur anywhere on the skin. Its main cause is sun exposure. It also develops in people who received radiation therapy as children. It rarely spreads to other parts of the body.

Squamous cell carcinoma accounts for about 20 percent of skin cancers. Its main cause is sun exposure, and it can occur on many regions of the skin. It can also develop in skin that has been burned, damaged by chemicals, or exposed to X-rays. About 2 to 5 percent of squamous cell carcinomas spread to other parts of the body.

Melanoma, one of the most serious forms of skin cancer, can develop anywhere on the body. Invasive melanoma can grow deep into the skin and can invade lymph nodes and blood vessels. Metastatic melanoma can spread to distant parts of the body.

Other, rare types of skin cancer include Merkel cell cancer, Kaposi sarcoma, other sarcomas, cutaneous (skin) lymphoma, and skin adnexal tumors.

Stay Sun Safe

What's the best way to use sunscreen? Dr. C. Joseph Bennett at RBOI recommends the following:

- Choose sunscreen with 30 SPF or higher. Don't use any past its expiration date.
- Cover your body with at least an ounce of sunscreen and shake it before use.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours (sooner if you get wet, sweat, or wipe your skin).
- Apply sunscreen even on cloudy days.
- Choose lip balm with sunscreen and use it year-round.

Dr. Bennett also recommends staying out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and wearing protective clothing and hats that cover your ears and neck.



Which to Use, Surgery or Radiation?

Skin cancer treatments include surgery, radiation, cryotherapy (freezing the tumor), and chemotherapy applied to the skin. The method used depends on treatment effectiveness, treatment time and cost, the cancer's size and features, and the patient's general health.

Studies show that for basal and squamous cell carcinomas, surgery and radiation treatments are equally effective.

In Mohs surgery, thin layers of skin are cut away and examined for cancer until no cancer is found. Surgery is used for small skin cancers that can be easily removed. It is also used in young patients, for whom radiation may pose a greater risk.

Radiation treatment is commonly used for advanced or multiple lesions, in cases where the cancer has spread to lymph nodes, in locations where surgery can cause deformities (like the eyelid, external ear, nose, and upper lip), and in cases where some cancer remains after surgery. Radiation is also used for people who cannot have surgery or who are concerned about scarring.

by the numbers

800,000

Annual cases of basal cell carcinomas in the US



more than 200,000

Annual cases of squamous cell carcinomas in the US



100,640

Estimated melanoma cases diagnosed in the U.S. in 2024



8,290

Estimated deaths from melanoma in the U.S. in 2024

Moles: Benign, or Melanoma?

When examining moles, use the ABCDE rule:

A=Asymmetry: One half of a mole or birthmark does not match the other.

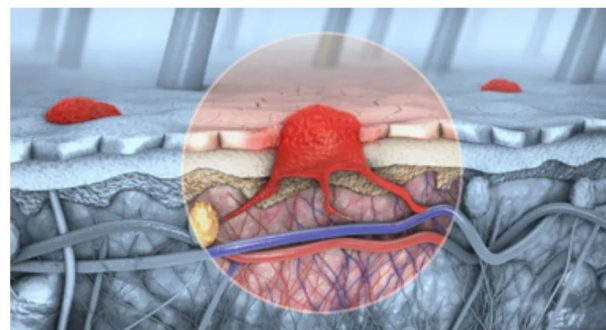
B=Border: Edges are irregular, ragged, notched, or blurred.

C=Color: Color is not the same all over and may include different shades of brown or black, or may have patches of pink, red, white, or blue.

D=Diameter: Spot is larger than 6 millimeters across (about pencil eraser width).

E=Evolving: The mole's size, shape, or color changes.

Check to see if a spot looks different from all the other spots on your skin. If you see something that causes you concern, tell your doctor.



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22





MAY THE 4TH BE WITH YOU: Over the last few years, sci-fi fans have adopted May 4 as a special day to commemorate all things **Star Wars**. For those who love to indulge, there are plenty of locally owned comic book shops so you can browse to your heart's content.

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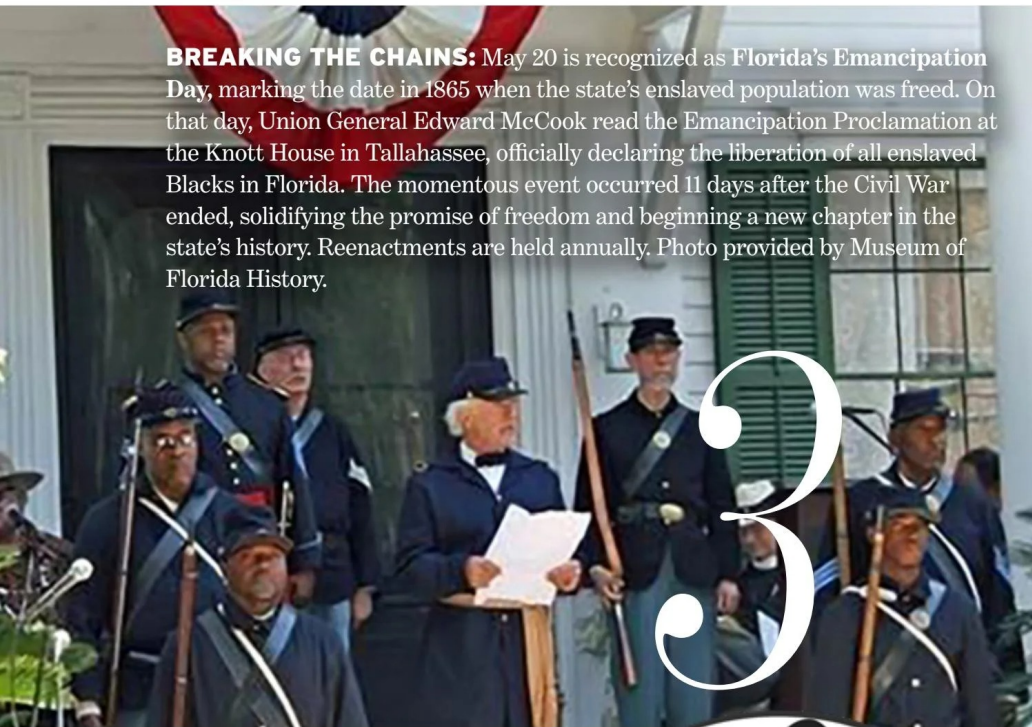
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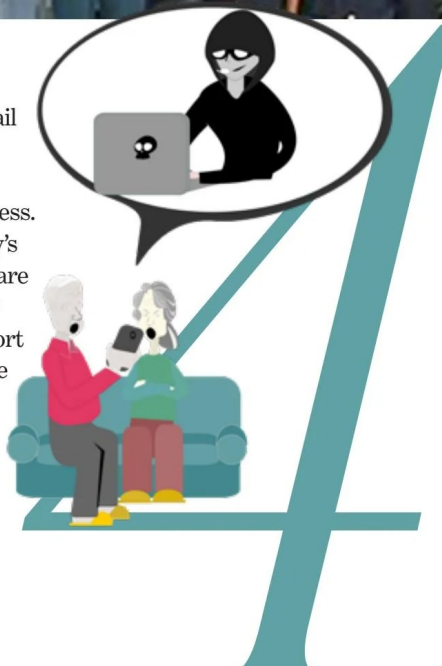


BACK THE BLUE: Lake County's 6th annual **Back the Blue** Walk to show support for local law enforcement takes place on May 3 at Wootton Park, Tavares. The event begins at 9am with a free breakfast, followed by a walk to the Lake County Sheriff's Office and Tavares Police Dept (1/2 miles) ending with a free lunch. Contact Shannon Cook at 352.630.3519 for details.

BREAKING THE CHAINS: May 20 is recognized as Florida's Emancipation Day, marking the date in 1865 when the state's enslaved population was freed. On that day, Union General Edward McCook read the Emancipation Proclamation at the Knott House in Tallahassee, officially declaring the liberation of all enslaved Blacks in Florida. The momentous event occurred 11 days after the Civil War ended, solidifying the promise of freedom and beginning a new chapter in the state's history. Reenactments are held annually. Photo provided by Museum of Florida History.



BEWARE AND STAY VIGILANT: Scammers often pose as trusted companies to target cell phones and email accounts. Their messages may look or sound legitimate, but always verify the sender's details—such as the email address. If the source doesn't match the company's official name, it's likely a scam. Never share personal information or click on links or attachments. If you suspect a scam, report the message, block the sender, and delete it immediately. To stay safe, contact the company directly to confirm your account status. Stay cautious and protect your personal information!



LA HISTORIA DE FLORIDA: Everyone's Mexican (and loves margaritas) on **Cinco de Mayo**, but Florida's Latino culture runs deep all year long. About 691,000 people of Mexican origin actually live in the state, making up 14.42% of its Hispanic population. Florida has the third-largest Latino population in the U.S., with extensive ties to Spain and Latin America. While Cubans make up the largest group, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and South Americans also contribute to Florida's diverse culture.



BEAR NECESSITIES: The Florida black bear is now a recovered species and no longer a conservation concern. They are sometimes spotted in the area, especially during mating season in late spring and early summer when they are most active. Juvenile bears may wander into unexpected places as they leave their mothers' home ranges. Though typically shy, they are powerful animals. If you encounter one, give it space. Concerns can be reported to the FWC Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888.404.3922.



CENTURY OF LEARNING:

Eustis Elementary School turned 100 on March 22! Principal Reanna Boardway, staff, students and guests proudly watched as Mayor Willie Hawkins presented an official proclamation recognizing the day and honoring the school's impact on education and the community. On Facebook, Lake County Schools acknowledged the milestone and announced upcoming renovations.

Fun fact: Class photos are still taken on the school's front steps, just as they were in 1925 when it opened!

ANCIENT PRACTICE: Tai Chi, known as "meditation in motion" by Harvard Medical Health, benefits people of all ages and fitness levels. It enhances flexibility, balance and strength while reducing stress, anxiety and depression. This ancient practice supports rehabilitation, helps seniors maintain mobility and improves athletic performance. Regular practice boosts mood, strengthens immunity, lowers cholesterol and blood pressure, improves posture and promotes overall well-being by integrating the body, mind and spirit. Enjoy this ancient practice nearby:

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Roundabouts are popular in and around Lake and Sumter Counties, so Just a friendly reminder that although they keep traffic flowing smoothly, it's important to follow a few simple rules to ensure everyone's safety. Remember, traffic moves counterclockwise, so always yield at the entrances; traffic in the circle has the right-of-way. Slow down to 10-15 mph as you approach and always watch for pedestrians crossing! If you're already in the circle, there's no need to stop—just keep moving if it's clear, as stopping can frustrate drivers behind you.

SAVOR THE MOMENTS: Mother's Day on Sunday, May 11 is a perfect time to celebrate the incredible moms in our lives. Whether it's your own mother, a grandmother or a mother figure, the day is about showing appreciation and love. A heartfelt card, flowers or breakfast in bed are classic gestures, but even just saying "Thank you for everything" means the world.

If possible, spend quality time together—whether it's a phone call, a homemade meal or a fun outing. The key is thoughtfulness; small gestures filled with love make all the difference. 🌸





PEOPLE

Brittany Rudolph Montgomery

Award-winning educator and mentor continues teaching beyond classroom walls.

STORY: CINDY PETERSON × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL

Why I love what I do: Teaching empowers me to foster literacy and critical thinking in students. Witnessing their growth and enthusiasm for learning is incredibly rewarding and fuels my commitment to education.

Achievements I am proud of: Throughout my career, I have been honored with several accolades, including securing a membership in the National Honor Society of Leadership and Success. I was featured in **Lake and Sumter Style Magazine** as one of the Top 40 Professionals Under 40 and recognized as FOX 35 Orlando News Teacher of the Week. In addition to my Teacher of the Year titles, my commitment to community service has earned me multiple Presidential Volunteer Service Awards.

I entered pageantry to: Amplify my advocacy for education and community service. Notably, I have recently held titles such as Mrs. Lake County, Florida (2021-2022), Ms. Elite Lake County, and Pure International Ms. Florida. Currently, I

serve as the Pure International Cover Model & Mrs. Denim and Diamonds. These platforms have enabled me to promote education and mentorship on a broader scale.

I deeply admire: My mothers, Cynthia Clack and Felicia Bishop, my great-aunts, Vivian Williams and Dorothy Hines and my spiritual mom, Phyllis McKnight. These women have been foundational in my life, exemplifying faith, perseverance and resilience. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in my journey.

I'll make a difference through: Education, mentorship and faith-based initiatives. I aim to equip young people with the tools they need to succeed academically and personally, fostering a generation of empowered individuals.

Life lesson: My journey has taught me the value of perseverance, faith and servant leadership. True success

VITAL STATS

- 8th Grade English Teacher at The Villages Charter School
- B.S. in History from Tuskegee University
- Former National Park Service Park Ranger
- Master's Degrees in Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Leadership
- 2024 Finalist Lake County Teacher of the Year
- Carver Middle School 2024 Teacher of the Year

lies not in personal achievements but in how many people you uplift along the way.

A saying I live by: "No lights, no cameras—just action. Position and power mean nothing without first being a servant." This mantra emphasizes the importance of humility and service in all endeavors.

Fun Fact: I love traveling and exploring historical sites, which enriches my teaching and personal growth. 📍



CINDY PETERSON

Know a person of interest? Tell us! → Email your recommendation to cindy@akersmediagroup.com.



Top Left to Bottom Right:

Luis G. León-Alvarado, MD; S.K. Steven Houston III, MD, FASRS; Thalmon R. Campagnoli, MD;
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PEOPLE

RAEGHAN FICKETT

Mount Dora teen balances school with sports and looks forward to a bright future.

STORY: GINA HORAN × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL

VITAL STATS

- Junior at Mount Dora High School
- 17 years old
- 4.64 GPA
- Competitive in both volleyball and weightlifting
- Secretary of the local Future Business Leaders of America
- Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program participant

Staying Balanced: I do my best to keep up with my schoolwork and stay on top of my assignments by setting aside time to study after school and practices. When I have a game, I try to get my work done beforehand. Using my time wisely and not procrastinating is my best method of juggling school and sports.

Favorite Sport: Volleyball has always been my favorite sport, but I have recently learned to love weightlifting, so now I would have to say that both are my favorite.

A Decade On:

In 10 years, I'd like to see myself having completed school with at least a bachelor's degree and have an established, stable career with a loving family by my side.

Higher Education: I plan on attending a university in Florida and will use the Florida Bright Futures academic scholarship to do so. I have worked for the last three years to complete the program and now that I have the Illustrator—Adobe Certified Expert (ACE)—certification, I only have one more class to finish my senior year to guarantee my full scholarship amount. I plan to major within the medical field and would like to play sports in college, as well.

Life Changing Partnership: I'm passionate about the Unified Olympics, a Special Olympics program that allows students with disabilities to compete in various sports. I have volunteered for several years, competing statewide in flag football, basketball and tennis, with plans to add more sports next year. Representing Mount Dora High School, we have even won state championships. This program is incredibly rewarding. It's all about

fostering strong bonds and building confidence in athletes. I am a proud advocate for Unified Olympics and grateful to be part of something that makes such a meaningful impact on so many lives. 🏆



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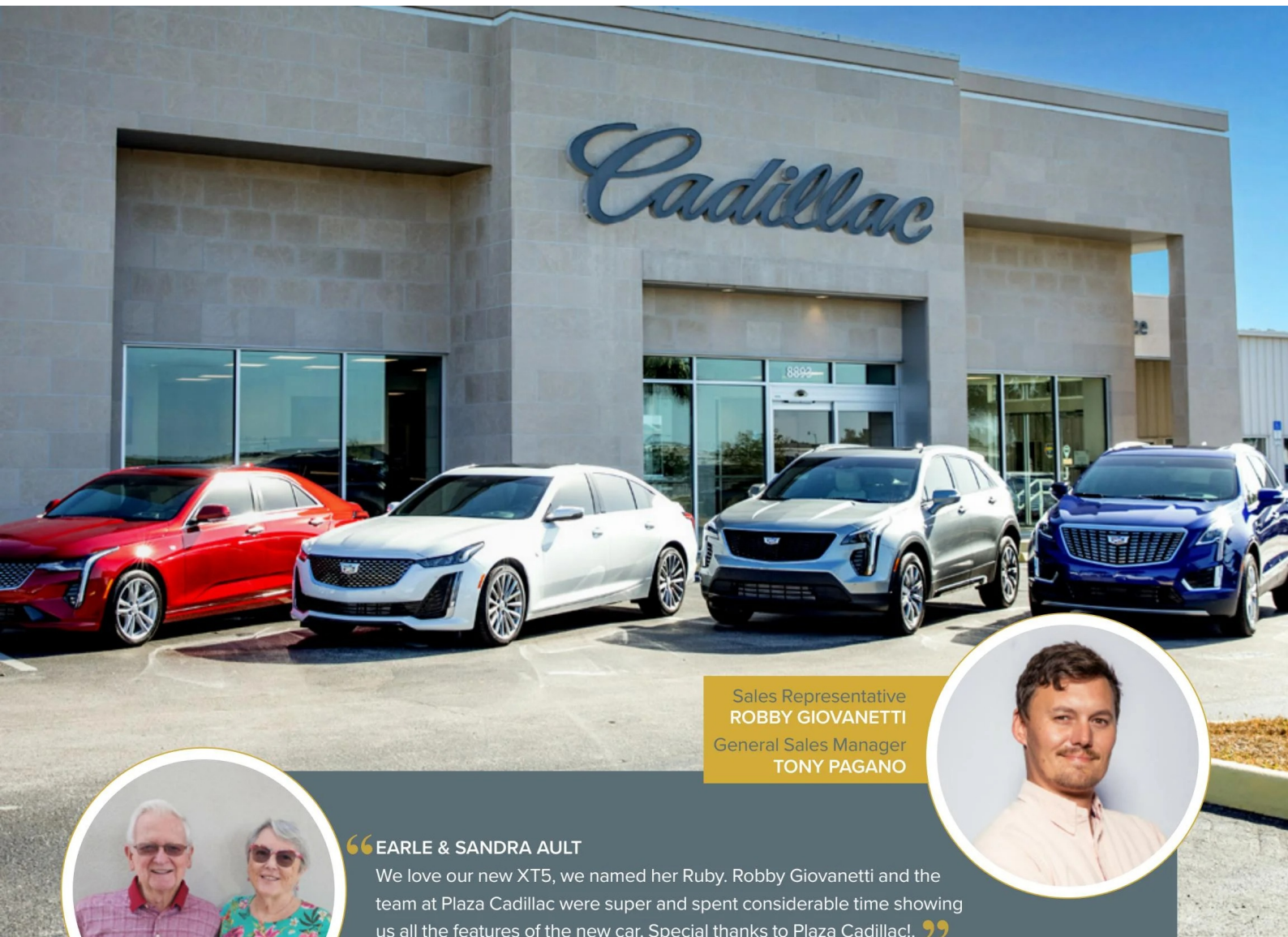
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MARYCELL RODRIGUEZ-MABRY IS
DETERMINED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

STORY: CYNTHIA MCFARLAND × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL + PROVIDED



Describing Marycell Rodriguez-Mabry as a “people person” is like saying water is wet. Knowing how to listen, and most importantly, care, defined her approach over three decades learning the transportation game from the ground up, establishing her own company, and securing major contracts.

Marycell’s hard work was recently validated when she was named **Lake and Sumter Style’s** 2025 Businesswoman of the Year, an honor that also recognizes the genuine person she is every day — even when no one is watching.

Marycell was chosen as the winner during a reverse drawing

gala hosted by Akers Media that celebrated the magazine’s 12th annual Businesswomen of **Style**.

“I am very grateful. I see that God has placed me in positions where I can be an example and let it be known that your dreams can come true. You have to have faith and work ethic and know that He is able,” says Marycell.

FROM THE GROUND UP

Marycell was born in Harlem in 1970 to parents who originally immigrated to the U.S. from Cuba.

Faith in God was a strong foundation in their family. Raised in New York, she attended Annunciation Catholic School in Manhattan and graduated in 1988. Although her parents spoke Spanish

at home, Marycell and her two siblings learned English in school.

After her mother’s death in 1989, Marycell moved down to Orange County to be near her brother and his family.

Although her initial plan was to enroll in college and then pursue a career, Marycell says the death of her mother was disorienting. Instead of heading to college, she decided to go to work. The first job she took after moving to the Sunshine State was toll booth operator. Little did she know that such a low-level introduction to the transportation system would evolve into a successful career.

At the time, her brother was working for LYNX, which provides bus service throughout Central Florida. When the company had

an opening for a reservationist, he encouraged his little sister to apply. Being bilingual definitely worked to her advantage and Marycell was hired for that position in 1995.

She's worked in the transportation industry ever since. From reservationist, she moved into dispatch, then worked her way up to dispatch supervisor, and eventually she was managing the call center.

Being a people person, Marycell had hopes of a business that would transport people in need. Her dream was to have her own transportation company, but she wasn't sure how to make that happen.

"I met a gentleman named Pedro Portuondo in 2016 who mentored

me and showed me how to bring my vision to life," Marycell says.

As a female Hispanic small business owner, she became certified as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), a Department of Transportation program.

Marycell launched Independent Mobility Transport (IMT) in 2018 to provide quality service for those who are disadvantaged in transportation.

Today, Pedro is CFO of her company.

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Many citizens lacked viable options for public transportation before the

Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990.

In Central Florida, LYNX not only provides "regular" bus service, but is also the coordinator and service provider for "transportation disadvantaged" individuals who can't use regular bus route services due to their disabilities or other limitations.

To serve them, LYNX subcontracted the paratransit portion of the service to various transportation companies. Marycell has worked with these subcontractors for 20 years.

Marycell's 30 years of experience gave her the foundation needed to be successful in providing quality service. IMT's first contract was providing non-emergency transportation in Lake County with a team of three drivers. "We began with 50 trips daily. We continue taking customers to these life-sustaining appointments," she says.

In 2020, Marycell was awarded a contract in Coral Gables to provide paratransit service. She assisted local providers, helping them improve daily service operations. Her knowledge of dispatching and scheduling techniques made her an in-demand consultant.

Her expertise has also been sought beyond the Sunshine State. Marycell has assisted with paratransit in Atlanta, Ohio, and California.

In 2023, IMT was awarded a contract in Orlando with Transdev, a LYNX subcontractor for paratransit services.

That contract returned Marycell to the division where she worked for over 20 years, this time as the owner of IMT, providing the quality service she is known for as she continues to make a difference.

It wasn't common to see women driving when Marycell started. While female drivers are more prevalent now, you won't typically find Marycell behind the wheel transporting customers. These days, she stays busy managing her company and



working on securing contracts to expand IMT, which currently has more than 100 drivers.

STEP UP

Marycell's business accomplishments are impressive, but that's not the most memorable thing about this hard-working mother of four grown children. Through the years, her faith expanded as she relied on God and trusted Him to mold her life so she could help others.

In 2021, she launched Step Up, a home that provides a vital option for women and their children fleeing abusive family lives.

"It's something I do to pay back and to let women know they don't have to stay in abusive relationships because of the financial burdens that being a single mom creates," Marycell says.

She explains that many women are afraid to leave bad situations because they're afraid they can't survive on their own and provide for their children.

"I'm grateful God has me in a position where I'm able to help women become self-sufficient and know that through Christ you can do anything," says Marycell, who funds and manages the home she built but doesn't live there herself. "I never imagined that God would bless me to the point that I'm able to fund a house for women who have been abused and pay for it until they're able to transition out."

In addition to helping women navigate through this challenging time, Step Up helps them develop the self-esteem they'll need so they don't fall back into abusive relationships.

"It also shows their kids a different lifestyle, so they don't repeat the cycle," Marycell adds.

"Women in abusive relationships are judged a lot. When they're in an abusive relationship sometimes they feel captive because they can lose everything they have if they leave.

I'M GRATEFUL GOD HAS ME IN A POSITION WHERE I'M ABLE TO HELP WOMEN BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT AND KNOW THAT THROUGH CHRIST YOU CAN DO ANYTHING.

—MARYCELL RODRIGUEZ-MABRY

As mothers, they can get caught up thinking, 'Do I leave and start over or do I stay and take the abuse?'"

Marycell is definitely making a difference. "Someone saying, 'Girl, you don't have to put up with that' isn't the same as someone offering them an option to help them get out. I wanted to be solution based. If someone wants to get out of an abusive relationship, I am one of the options."

The Step Up home can house 20 women and children. Ten women have already "graduated" through the program and transitioned out into their own living places.

Step Up partners with Harbor House of Central Florida, an organization that actively works to help break the cycle of domestic abuse.

"Harbor House encouraged me to have a transitional home for women leaving them to have a safe place. They help by offering counseling, GED classes, helping the women find jobs and then getting their own place," says Marycell, who donated to Harbor House for years before opening the Step Up home.

Women and their children stay at Step Up completely free of charge.

"Seeing these ladies and their children in a new place and being able to manage on their own is the reward for me. Some of them come back to visit and when I see them

doing well, it's worth more than anything they could have paid me," Marycell says.

LIVING TESTIMONY

Marycell's children Princess, Precious, Clete and Reggie range in age from 20 to 30. Thanks to them, she has four grandchildren who live near her, and she's thrilled to be active in their lives.

After her first marriage ended, Marycell was happily married to George for 10 years before he passed away.

Like many women, she's experienced her fair share of heartache and challenges. But she doesn't dwell on setbacks. Marycell is one of those people who always looks for a silver lining. When she finds it, she wants to share it with others.

"Experience is the best teacher. We all go through things – some because we're hardheaded, some to be a testimony. I feel that the things I had to go through were so I could be a testimony for someone else," she says.

Her advice to other women is heartfelt and straightforward.

"Keep working hard and trust in God. It isn't always easy, but you have to stay in the race. People used to laugh at me, but I found out that with faith, hard work and believing in myself, dreams can come true." ☺

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SPECIAL PROMOTIONAL FEATURE





M E R I D E T H N A G E L

P . A .

Merideth Nagel is celebrating the 20th anniversary of her law firm, a milestone that reflects her passion, dedication and the strong, family-oriented team she has built. With 27 years as an attorney, Merideth leads a firm of six women attorneys and now welcomes her son, a litigator, into the practice. "We believe in Margaret Mead's idea that a small group of dedicated people can change the world. We do that one client at a time," Merideth says.

Her firm— Merideth Nagel and The Legacy Legal Team—is more than just a workplace. It's a space that values families, where children are welcomed

and where both men and women are supported in prioritizing their families. "My team members are human beings first. If I'm going to take on the stress of running a business, I also want the privilege of creating as much joy as possible," she says.

Merideth's 20th Anniversary is just a part of her legacy. Her uncle, Dick Langley, began practicing law in South Lake County in 1966 and retired with Merideth's firm. Now, by joining her firm, her son will continue that tradition. "I'm a common thread in nearly 60 years of legal services in this community. Knowing my son will continue this work with our

team is incredibly exciting," Merideth says.

With a foundation built on experience, heart and a dedication to clients, Merideth and her team continue to shape the future of legal services with confidence, compassion and an unwavering commitment to excellence.

The name of her firm, The Legacy Legal Team, reflects that commitment—to making a lasting impact not just in their own firm, but in the lives of their clients. "We want to help people leave their own legacies—whether through estate planning, businesses, elder law, real estate or other life changes," she says.



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At Ultimate Health Direct Primary Care, owner and nurse practitioner Amanda Gaskin and her team provide a range of services with a focus on "pretty happy medicine."

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Ultimate Health operates on a cash-based, membership model, offering luxury healthcare that's both affordable and accessible to all. With a focus on wellness and intimate care, the team ensures each client leaves feeling their best, inside and out.

As the 2025 SBA North Florida District Businesswoman of the Year and Florida Businesswoman of the Year, Amanda has been recognized for her leadership and commitment to client care.

"We're here to make wellness convenient and personalized, and we do it with a smile," she adds.



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BROOKE

V E R M E U L E N

For Brooke Vermeulen, prosperity, wealth and health are the guiding principles behind a purposeful life. She defines success not by financial benchmarks but by the freedom to create, the joy in the journey, and the positive impact left on others.

"For me, being prosperous means more than just a word, it's the foundation of a life well lived and represents balance, purpose and the ability to create something meaningful," she says.

In 2025, Brooke continues to build a legacy rooted in balance and meaning. Her advice to young women and mentees is clear: believe in yourself, stay consistent, and don't shy away from risk.

Relationships, resilience and hard work are the backbone of achievement, but so is the ability to care for yourself while caring for others. She emphasizes that success without personal well-being is empty.

"True success isn't just about financial gain; it's about the impact you make, the freedom you create and the joy you find along the way."

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At Salon NK, owner and stylist Nicole Campbell leads a talented team dedicated to delivering exceptional hair care in a welcoming, fun environment. "Creating an interactive atmosphere is key—it keeps our passion for the hair industry alive," Nicole says. "We love that our clients feel like part of our salon family."

Nicole, along with fellow stylist Christie Truluck both specialize in

dimensional coloring and extensions, featuring Salon NK's own extension line. Amanda Youngren is a custom color artist and Jasmine McClain brings fresh energy with her expertise in blondes and vibrant color transformations. They all offer personalized cuts and other services with a focus on making each client's beauty on the outside match their beauty within.

Tyler Sponaugle, the only male stylist, offers multidimensional colors and keratin treatments and Keith Campbell, the "K" in NK Salon, designed the shop and continues to ensure it remains a creative, stylish hub.

"What's also pretty cool is that our combined experience totals over 55 years, providing a broad range of expertise for our clients," says Nicole.



LISA

GONZALEZ

Lisa Gonzalez, owner of Nails by Lisa, has been creating jaw-dropping nail art for over 20 years. What started with practicing on her cousin has grown into a thriving appointment-only salon in Lake Panasoffkee. Known for her intricate designs, 3D artwork, glow-in-the-dark creations and much more, Lisa is a true nail artist with a perfectionist's touch.

At Nails by Lisa, every visit is more than a service—it's a confidence boost in the form of flawless nails. Clients bring her their ideas, and she turns them into mini masterpieces with stunning precision. "When your nails are on point, so is your confidence," Lisa says. That belief drives her passion—and her clients feel it.

Her private, cozy salon offers a one-on-one experience that keeps regulars and snowbirds coming back year after year. She's known for going above and beyond—fixing nail mishaps, working around busy schedules and staying late to ensure every client leaves happy.

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At Advanced Orthopedics Institute, care goes far beyond clinical expertise—it's rooted in positivity, compassion and a shared mission to deliver the highest standard of orthopedic care. The team, led by the inspiring Dr. Cook, brings together a blend of experience, empathy and dedication that sets the tone for every patient interaction.

Karen Spell, front office, is the welcoming face patients see when they walk in. Her warmth and professionalism help create an environment where patients feel at ease before they even reach the exam room. Tahily Blanco-Herrera, assistant practice manager, keeps the daily flow running smoothly with a calm, confident presence and a genuine commitment to patient experience. Sofia Suarez, physical therapist, brings energy and focus to every session and works closely with patients to help them regain strength and mobility through thoughtful, customized treatment. And Rosa Ray,

practice administrator, ensures that the operation as a whole remains strong, efficient and centered around quality care.

This team is united by a simple but powerful mantra: positivity and brightness, best quality of care. Serving a primarily older patient population requires patience, energy and heart and this group brings it all, every single day. They are diverse in background and skills, which adds layers of insight and creativity to how they work together.

Their shared respect for Dr. Cook and his leadership is clear. "He listens, he supports and he truly cares—not just about patients, but about all of us," the team agrees.

At AOI, excellence is the standard and every patient is treated with kindness and dignity. Every day begins with purpose and every team member plays a critical role in helping people return to the lives they love, which is what makes the atmosphere so special.



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Red Bird Cottage & Farm is a welcoming destination founded in 2022 by Alisha Casamona and her husband Dave.

In 2021, she unexpectedly lost her healthy, active father John to COVID-19, and her world changed overnight. "We were very close, and his passing shook our foundation," Alisha says of her family, especially her mom Karen, who had been with John since she was 16.

They were soon blessed with the opportunity to purchase acreage on a private lake in Eustis, and right away, beautiful cardinals began to appear one by one, perching in the trees.

"When cardinals appear, angels are near," Alisha says. "The cardinals never left, and so Red Bird Cottage & Farm was born."

With a background in mental health care and a lifelong love of horses, Alisha hopes to combine the two and share the peace and comfort they bring with those who may be struggling with trauma or loss. She says her dad is always an inspiration.

"My dad, God and the cardinals are working together to bring a healthy spirit to us every day," she says.

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Mica Gilles has dedicated over a decade to the senior living industry, serving as Executive Director of Sumter Senior Living in The Villages. Since moving to Florida from New Jersey three and a half years ago, she has led the community to thrive with a 97% or higher occupancy rate and a team of 150 employees. "We serve over 330 residents, from independent living to memory care. I love seeing transformation, whether in people or in places," Mica says.

Alongside her husband Nevito, Mica co-owns Gilles Deluxe Properties, where they buy, renovate and design homes for sale, long-term rental and Airbnb. "I love taking a home from unsellable to beautiful. It's so rewarding," she says. Balancing career, business and family, Mica believes success doesn't mean sacrifice.

Through both ventures, she continues to serve her community, creating spaces where people feel at home.

"Whatever our hearts desire, we can make it happen."





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Stephanie Lance isn't just the CFO of CSL Construction in Minneola—she's the heart of a company that's growing in both size and spirit. She and her husband Corey met in 2010 and started small, taking on kitchen and bath remodels.

By 2013, Corey had earned his contractor's license, they were married, and had just welcomed their second child. What began as a one-man handy service is now a thriving five-million-dollar family business.

A proud mom of four, Stephanie finds deep purpose in helping homeowners rebuild after a loss. She's equally proud to run a company that supports not only their family but their employees' families too. "Growth in 2025 means more than numbers," she says. "It means continuing to evolve and hopefully expanding to new areas like Tampa."

Whether at home or on the job site, Stephanie and Corey stick to one simple philosophy: "We treat others the way we want to be treated."





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Dr. Christina Yi, Angela Ugarte, ARNP and Alexis Bowhay, PA bring a dynamic blend of expertise, artistry and compassion to Village Institute of Plastic Surgery. Together, they embody VIP's mission to deliver world-class aesthetic care with heart and purpose.

Dr. Yi is a fellowship-trained plastic and reconstructive surgeon known for her precision and artistry, she helps patients achieve their goals with confidence and care.

Angela Ugarte, ARNP, brings over 20 years of healthcare experience and a specialized focus on aesthetic medicine. Fellowship-trained through the American Foundation for Aesthetic Medicine, she's known for creating youthful, natural results with expert technique.

Alexis Bowhay, PA-C, is a board-certified Physician Assistant and the first AFFAM fellowship graduate. She specializes in injectables, lasers and cosmetic treatments that enhance natural beauty.

"The results are beautiful, but it's the intangibles, like the way patients walk out taller and more confident that makes what we do so fulfilling."

- Dr. Christina Yi.



LAKE CENTRE HOME CARE

Lake Centre Home Care has a team of highly skilled clinicians dedicated to all aspects of managing your home care safely and effectively. They offer skilled nursing and private duty services, to provide the home care you need, with or without a physician's order.

"We provide every patient with the best care possible, whether they need a skilled nurse for rehab and recovery or a private duty home health aide to assist with bathing, dressing and meal preparation," says Shayna Grunewald, CEO of Lake Centre Home Care.

The female-led company continues to grow since its inception in 2017, changing the way health care services are offered to meet the changing needs of their patients.

Whether providing temporary medical services for surgery recovery or stepping up the level of care as patients age in place, Lake Centre Home Care has the qualified staff to be there when you need them. "We have managed our business growth wisely and are poised to take on the future of home care, whatever that may bring," explains Lori Davis, COO.

Lake Centre Home Care provides health care services for our region's most precious resource: people.



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AGELESS BEAUTY MED SPA

At Ageless Beauty Med Spa, owner and nurse injector Danielle Santiago leads a friendly and personable team committed to providing comprehensive wellness services under one roof. Danielle focuses on weight loss and all things aesthetic, helping clients feel beautiful and confident.

Her team includes Crystal Drayton of Allure Beauty, who offers specialized beauty treatments, and Tamara Weeks, a nail care specialist known for her expertise in trouble toenails and overall nail health.

Chef Louis Santiago brings his culinary expertise, providing healthy and delicious to-go meals, smoothies and energizing drinks that perfectly complement the spa's wellness-focused atmosphere.

"Our goal is to be a one-stop shop where clients can receive everything they need to feel healthy and refreshed," says Danielle. "It's truly fulfilling to offer a space where we can work together to help others embrace their beauty and inner glow. It makes me feel like I'm living in my purpose."

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CONCIERGE TITLE

Joni Story has been working alongside Merideth Nagel for 20 years, growing from answering phones to Title Team Lead at Concierge Title Services. Merideth, owner of both Concierge Title and the Merideth Nagel and The Legacy Legal Team, credits Joni's leadership, expertise

and dedication as a driving force behind the title side of the business. "She is the smartest, most dedicated title professional I've ever met. She inspires with a soft voice and a loving hand, but when it's time to get in the trenches, she's the first one in with a shovel," Merideth says.

With Merideth actively involved as an attorney, Concierge Title offers solutions other companies can't. "If we can't close it, nobody can," Merideth says. With a strong team and Joni at the helm, Concierge Title Services continues to provide exceptional service and innovative problem-solving.



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1201 W HWY 50 SUITE B, CLERMONT
CONCIERGE TITLESERVICES.COM



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JO LEEN
COOPER HOWE
352.267.0770

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Morris Realty

& INVESTMENTS

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352.516.0903



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Setting the Gold Standard in Real Estate

At Morris Realty & Investments, excellence isn't the goal—it's the foundation. Powered by a tight-knit team of fewer than 15 driven agents, these women are reshaping what it means to buy or sell real estate. Here, quality always outweighs quantity, and every transaction gets a personalized, neighborly touch that big firms can't match. The women of Morris Realty are more than seasoned professionals—they're trusted members of the community who make relationships priority leading to successful numbers. For sellers, that means securing

top-dollar with smart, strategic guidance. For buyers, it's about unlocking the perfect home or investment opportunity. The goals of every client are met with the same urgency and care as their own. What truly sets Morris Realty apart is their deep-rooted integrity, standout service, and relentless drive for results. Their gold-star reputation is built on trust, transparency, and a true love for real estate. Whether you're buying, selling, or investing, experience the golden touch of Morris Realty's exceptional women. Your dream is their mission.



KIM

VARNADORE

For nineteen years, Kim Varnadore has been an insurance and financial services business owner focused on helping clients protect what matters to them. With a background in teaching, education remains at the heart of her work, and she loves empowering people to understand their coverage, uncover gaps and develop a strategy for their future.

"I don't want someone's world to fall apart just because they didn't plan," she says. Kim's agency specializes in both insurance and financial services. Kim believes insurance and investments go hand in hand. "If you don't protect what you've worked hard for and what is important to you, you risk losing it," she says. "Protect then invest."

When she talks about success it's not about chasing personal wealth it's about taking care of her customers. "When I help my customers protect what matters to them, everything else falls into place."

KIM VARNADORE
INSURANCE AGENCY INC.
352.343.5181 | KIMVARNADORE.COM



PAY-PER-KLIP

SALON & SPA

At Pay-Per-Klip Salon in Eustis, owner Jessica Merchant and manager Joy Butterley lead a full-service salon and spa known for skill, mentorship and a strong sense of community.

"We've become a well-known name in the area," says Jessica. "Our clients are amazing about recommending us and there's a real sense of camaraderie in the salon. A lot of them know all of us—not just their stylist but also their esthetician and massage therapists.

At Pay-Per-Klip, stylists are trained through an in-house mentorship program, with hands-on guidance from start to finish. "Everybody's on

the same level—whether you're brand new or have done hair forever," says Joy.

With 22 years of experience, Joy is a short-hair expert. Jessica, a long-hair, foil and blonding specialist with 26 years of experience, adds: "We train our stylists from the ground up with high standards and hands-on mentorship—it takes real dedication, but it's worth it to grow great talent."

PAY-PER-KLIP SALON & SPA
352.901.5607 | PAYPERKLIPSALON.COM
2380 EAST BURLEIGH BLVD., EUSTIS



VICKI

WYNNS

CEO

Vicki Wynns isn't new to Langley Health Services, but stepping into the CEO role marks a powerful new chapter in her long-standing commitment to the organization. Since joining in February 2012, Vicki has remained focused on expanding awareness of Langley's full range of services; adult primary care, pediatrics, adult and pediatric dentistry, walk in clinic, podiatry, radiology services and a robust behavioral health program, including medication-assisted therapy and substance use disorder treatment.

A common misconception is that Langley serves only uninsured patients, but Vicki wants the community to know they welcome all payer classes—commercial insurance, Medicaid, Medicare and the uninsured. With locations throughout Sumter, Southeast Marion and Citrus Counties, Langley also offers discounted medications from our pharmacy with a free home delivery service available in the tri-county area.

"Healthcare is so important and primary care may be delayed due to

perceptions of lack of affordability. We're able to be a very affordable option for the community's healthcare needs," Vicki says. "I'm very excited and energized to influence the future of our company."



LANGLEY HEALTH SERVICES
LANGLEYHEALTH.COM
1425 SOUTH US 301, SUMTERVILLE
888.298.5510



AMY ESTER FNP



ANCHORED IN HEALTH
352.203.3074
ANCHOREDINHEALTH@GMAIL.COM

At Anchored in Health, owner and family nurse practitioner Amy Ester has created a space where patients feel truly heard.

With a deep background in women's health and a commitment to accessibility, Amy offers services like primary care, acute visits, IV hydration, weight management, and, most recently, added bioidentical hormone replacement therapy.

Anchored in Health is located in the Preston Plaza in Oxford, where Amy takes great pride in offering personalized, time-rich visits that are anything but one-size-fits-all. Her approach is rooted in treating the whole person—balancing symptoms and labs and taking the time to understand what's really going on. Whether it's helping someone manage fatigue, poor sleep, or hormone imbalances, Amy believes in working together to find solutions that help.

"I think it's about letting patients really retake the reins of their health care," she says. "I'm just helping them figure out the why, and then we can work together to get them feeling better."





LEAH CONNER

**LEAH D. CONNER,
INTERIOR DESIGNER**

352.406.3018 | LEAHDCONNER.COM

With over 30 years in the field, Leah Conner, a registered interior designer, has talent that sets her apart. After earning both Business and Interior Design degrees, Leah completed the rigorous requirements set forth by the Board of Architecture and Interior Design, including the state licensing exam for the privilege to perform commercial work.

Her portfolio spans medical facilities, law offices, banks and high-end residential projects, but these days, she leans into her love of and the creative scale of commercial design. As project manager for most jobs, Leah thrives on seeing her vision come to life flawlessly.

With every project, Leah brings the same passion and precision that's made her work feel timeless. That's not just experience—it's vision, execution and serious design authority.

"I'm never surprised by how it looks; I've seen it in my head, but I'm always giddy when it comes together," she says.

Leah is a member of ASID, the American Society of Interior Designers, which advances the profession and unites a community that supports design impacting lives.





DR . JAYA B . KUMAR

FLORIDA RETINA INSTITUTE
790 SOUTH HIGHWAY 27/441, LADY LAKE
877.357.3846 | 352.259.9944
FLORIDARETINAINSTITUTE.COM

Dr. Jaya B. Kumar, MD, FASRS, is a board-certified vitreo-retinal specialist at Florida Retina Institute, known for her expertise, compassionate care and leadership in the field. She joined the practice in 2018, bringing ophthalmology training from Duke University and Cleveland Clinic.

"Every patient deserves to feel heard and understood," she says. "Our goal is always to ease concerns and create treatment plans tailored to each individual."

Dr. Kumar is a strong advocate for diversity in medicine, mentorship and mental health awareness. She serves as a local leader for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and helps organize the annual Out of the Darkness Walk. "It is so important for leaders to reflect their own experiences and wholeheartedly support their community."

A mother of two, Dr. Kumar balances medicine and motherhood with strength and grace. She continues to inspire future leaders while expanding access to advanced care across Central Florida.





EMBELLISHED SALON

EMBELLISHED AT WILDWOOD
1006 N MAIN ST., STE. 101-102
352.748.0892

EMBELLISHED AT LADY LAKE
668 N US HWY. 441
352.915.1056

EMBELLISHEDSALONS.COM

When Brook McKelvey opened Embellished Salon in 2016, she envisioned a space that offered more than just beauty services. "We wanted to be your one-stop shop for beauty and self-care," Brook shares.

Fast forward almost ten years and Embellished has become everything Brook dreamed—and more. Located in a charming building that once housed a 1950s grocery store, the 6,000-square-foot salon features 20 hairstyling chairs, three nail technicians, a massage therapist, 14 suites offering everything from hair and skincare to Botox and fillers and a boutique for shoppers interested in hair products, gift items, specialty clothing, jewelry and more.

What truly sets Embellished Salon apart is its emphasis on creating a positive, family-like atmosphere for both clients and the nearly 40 professionals who make up the team. "My goal has always been to create a place where everyone feels relaxed, valued, works together and supports one another," Brook explains.

In the next few months, Embellished will open a second location in Lady Lake, with a third location in Sumter County planned for later this year.

That success, Brook is quick to add, wouldn't be possible without the remarkable people that surround her.

"We've been asked many times how we're growing so quickly, and the truth

is—I couldn't do this without my incredible support system and the Embellished crew," she says.

With Kayla Crouse stepping into a management role, daily operations have become even smoother. The salon's in-house stylists are thriving, thanks in part to continued education and creative support from the marketing crew—Ashley Onorato, Taylor Rogers, and Bailey Zlotek. Office manager Melissa Batterbee has also become an indispensable part of the journey.

"We're truly blessed with a team of creative, ambitious women, and I'm excited to welcome more into our growing circle," Brook adds. "Let's see just how far we can go."





VILLAGERS FOR VETERANS

VILLAGERSFORVETERANS.ORG
516.220.5068



Since founding Villagers for Veterans in 2015, CEO Marie Bogdonoff has raised over \$3.5 million to support critically injured and underserved veterans. A 100% volunteer-led nonprofit, the organization funds mobility equipment, service dog training, emergency grants and now transitional housing for women veterans. "After visiting Walter Reed, I knew I had to do something bigger to make a difference," Marie says.

One of their most impactful efforts is Ashley's House, a safe haven built for women veterans who often face trauma, homelessness and lack of services. Vice President Kathryn Wilgus, a combat veteran herself, leads advocacy for these women. "Our goal is safety, healing and dignity—especially for those who feel forgotten," says Kathryn.

Through community donations, Villagers for Veterans continues its mission of "making a difference one veteran at a time"—filling gaps where other services fall short and giving every veteran, especially women, the chance to feel seen, supported and empowered.



NICOLE
SCARPELLI

ROSALYN
HOUSLEY

KARA
CLARK

THE RUSTIC ROSE

After years in home décor and fashion, Rosalyn Housley will retire in November later this year, and leave the celebrated Rustic Rose in good hands.

"This is our big year of transition," she says. "And Kara (Clark) and Nicole (Scarpelli), who have been with me for 8 and 11 years, respectively, will carry on the legacy."

Rosalyn tears up with pride, describing the relationship. "They have been like daughters to me and it's very rare to have that kind of bond in business."

Rather than sell the two boutiques to strangers, Rosalyn made a sound financial offer to pass the torch. "They have trained under me and I genuinely think God put us together," she says. When the moment became official, they all hugged and cried.

"A chord of three is not easily broken," Kara says.

Nicole now runs The Rustic Rose Fashion Boutique, and Kara curates the original home décor store. Together, they're keeping the charm, style and joy alive.

"The Rustic Rose will always remain a place where people feel at home," Rosalyn beams.



HOME ACCENTS AND GIFTS

3646 KIESSLER RD., THE VILLAGES

352.399.5407

THE RUSTIC ROSE.NET

FASHION BOUTIQUE

2757 WEST TORCH LAKE DR., THE VILLAGES

352.571.5256

RUSTICROSEFASHION.COM





ERICA

M C N A M E E



KARA

S P A R K S

Erica McNamee and Kara Sparks met eight years ago when Kara started doing Erica's hair. Somewhere between root touch-ups and spilling the tea, a friendship took root. What started as client and stylist quickly grew into an unshakable bond grounded in trust, encouragement and showing up for each other through it all.

Both women have been part of Business Women of Style before, but this year, they decided to do it together—not to promote a joint venture, but to celebrate the power of friendship.

Erica is an accounting specialist and owns Olson

Insurance, a third-generation family business known for its integrity and deep ties to the community. Kara is CEO of LaRue Kay, a full-service salon full of energy, creativity and heart. She is also the proprietor of LaRue Kay Boutique in Mount Dora, a shop where customers can discover an array of fashionable hand-curated merchandise.

One thrives in spreadsheets and numbers, the other in glamour, beauty and fashion. Together, they strike a balance that's rare.

They're not building a brand together but have created a bond with mutual support and respect. From late-night texts and number-

crunching to pep talks and perspective shifts, they're on speed dial for each other. They even have their own shared mantra—"Tide of it!"—an inside joke to remind each other not to take it all too seriously or give up.

They've helped each other through business challenges, personal hurdles and big transitions. When one is doubting, the other is steady. When one needs a push, the other is already cheering.

This collaboration wasn't strategic, it was personal and a moment to honor how far they've come and who they've become, side by side. Two businesses, two lives and one incredible friendship that is worth celebrating!

LA RUE KAY
SALON IN TAVARES
352.508.9542
299 WEST MAUD STREET, TAVARES

LARUE KAY BOUTIQUE
352.508.9542
252 N DONNELLY STREET,
MOUNT DORA

OLSON INSURANCE
352.669.4547
545 UMATILLA BLVD., UMATILLA
OLSONINSURANCEFL.COM



MARYCELL

R O D R I G U E Z - M A B R Y

INDEPENDENT MOBILITY TRANSPORT
407.401.5238 | INDEPENDENTMOBILITYTRANSPORT@GMAIL.COM

When a faithful individual is obedient, God will make a vision a reality. Marycell R Mabry is living proof. A seasoned leader with over 30 years in the business sector, she now serves as CEO of Independent Mobility Transportation, which she founded in 2018.

Under her leadership, the company has secured three major contracts, a reflection of her sharp business instincts and growth-focused mindset. Her influence in the transportation industry continues to expand through strategic partnerships and a deep understanding of the field.

But Marycell's impact reaches beyond business. In 2020, she launched Step Up, a social purpose home that offers housing and support for women and children escaping abuse. Several families have already transitioned into independent living with her help. A mentor to other women with big dreams, Marycell is driven by her faith and guided by her purpose and grounded in her calling to serve both her industry and her community.





GRETТА ELLIS

ELLIS INTEGRATIVE FAMILY PRACTICE

352.508.5418

1865 NIGHTINGALE LANE STE. B, TAVARES

At Ellis Integrative Family Practice, owner and nurse practitioner Gretta Ellis is transforming healthcare by focusing on the root cause of illness rather than masking symptoms. Specializing in gut health, hormone balancing and reducing inflammation, she helps patients manage issues like blood pressure, cholesterol and autoimmune conditions through natural approaches.

Her practice also offers a 90-day gut reset program, IV therapy for immune support, weight loss and more. By emphasizing hydration, nutrients and natural treatments, Gretta keeps patients on a path to lasting wellness.

"We believe everything starts in the gut," Gretta says. "When inflammation is controlled, people feel better overall."

Now in its fourth year, Ellis Integrative Family Practice is growing, with plans to break ground on a larger wellness center. "It's amazing to see people regain their health," Gretta says, adding that it makes a huge difference in many aspects of their lives.

"Knowing I am part of what's helping them feel their best is why I do this."



ELLIS
INTEGRATIVE



KIM REED

**MARTINI & REED
LUXURY TRAVEL**
321.228.5604
KIMLUXURYTRAVEL.COM

With her degree in Hospitality Management, extensive background in restaurant management and her passion for service and exploration, Kimberly Reed was led to luxury travel planning. As founder of Martini & Reed Luxury Travels, Kimberly curates high-end, customized experiences—specializing in river cruises, yacht journeys, guided European tours and exclusive lines like the Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons.

"I love hospitality, travel and luxury. That's what drives me," Kimberly says.

Partnered with industry powerhouse, Angela Hughes, of Trips & Ships Luxury Travel, Kimberly receives elite training and exclusive access she can pass on to clients, bringing their travel dreams to life with insight and expertise.

"Angela is a true leader and I'm proud to be affiliated with and mentored by her," Kimberly adds. "As for my company name, people ask me 'Who is Martini?' and I laugh because it's my maiden name. And just like I changed and evolved with time, so has travel. It signifies that I draw from my past experiences to custom tailor a truly unique, luxury experience for all my clients."



JILL

HAIGHT

MSHA, LPN



VILLAGES REHAB AND NURSING CENTER
900 CR 466, LADY LAKE

Jill Haight is the kind of healthcare professional every family hopes to meet during a difficult time. As Director of Marketing and Senior Nurse Liaison at Villages Rehab & Nursing Center, Jill works closely with hospital case managers, physicians, patients and families to ensure seamless transitions from hospital to rehab.

Her passion for advocacy is personal—born from her own long road to recovery, which fuels her empathy and fierce commitment to patient care.

Jill brings more than 15 years of experience in post-acute care and a sharp instinct for problem-solving. Her motto is simple: love what you do, never quit and always find a way. Whether she's consulting bedside or coordinating complex care plans, Jill puts patients first.

"Our goal is to get every patient back to their home," she says. That mission drives everything she does and is what makes her such a trusted, vital part of the Villages Rehab team.



COLLEEN WALLACE

WALLACE HEALTH PRIMARY AND WALK-IN CARE

287 S. CENTRAL AVE., UMATILLA
352.747.0747
WALLACEHEALTHCARES4U.COM

Colleen Wallace is an Advanced Practice Nurse (APN) and co-founder of Wallace Health, the Umatilla wellness clinic she launched in 2021 with her husband Ken. Their mission is to offer a space where patients are empowered to heal through personalized care, not just prescriptions.

From medical weight loss and hormone therapy to PRP treatments and aesthetic services like SCULPTRA, Colleen helps her patients reclaim their health and confidence by embracing sustainable lifestyle changes.

Patients at Wallace Health aren't just losing weight, they're gaining their lives back. Some have shed 50 to 150 pounds, taken flights for the first time, played with their kids again and rediscovered joy. "We build real relationships," Colleen says. "This work is personal for us."

Colleen and Ken work alongside their son Anthony and staff members Angie, Emily, and Dana.

Married for 22 years and parents to six boys, this power couple are true partners.

Her advice to women? "Don't let social media define your worth because everybody is unique, beautiful and capable."



Wallace Health
Primary & Walk-In Care



BRANDY

CONTRERAS REALTOR®

BASSETT PREMIER REALTY, INC.
352.978.5278
BRANDYSELLS4U@YAHOO.COM

Brandy Contreras got her real estate license after years of working alongside her husband at their family business, Omar's Painting. Fixing up homes sparked a deeper interest, and she knew real estate was the next step. "I love people and I love the journey that we take together to help them find a home, look for a home and buy a home," she says.

Brandy is dedicated to helping native Floridians achieve homeownership. While she welcomes outside investors, her primary focus is on individuals and families who need personalized support throughout the process. "Sometimes we work with someone for up to two years," she explains. "Whether they're building credit or working to pay off debt, I truly enjoy guiding them every step of the way."

She believes in honesty above all, even if it means turning down a commission. "That person will remember you," she says. "Building relationships is most important for me and I believe that the prosperity will come."

Brandy
Contreras
Realty



EDIBLE

ARRANGEMENTS



For nearly a decade, Edible Arrangements has been a part of the local community celebrating life's sweetest milestones one handcrafted fruit bouquet, dipped strawberry and party tray at a time. Known for their attention to detail and joyful energy, Rachelle and Becky love being part of birthdays, graduations, retirements, new babies and "just because."

This season, they're turning up the flavor with a spicy twist—Tangy Tajín can now be added to any arrangement for a little kick. Additional seasonal fruits include watermelon mango, kiwi and blueberries. And if you've ever wondered how these fruity masterpieces come together, now's your chance to find out. The new Make It Take It parties are perfect for friend groups, office outings or families who love to get creative together. Just call for details and you and your crew can make your own arrangement to take home.

From The Villages to Leesburg, Becky and Rachelle have you covered with always fresh, always hand-crafted treats hand-delivered with care.



CHARLENE JENKINS



352.801.7481 | JENKINSWEALTH352@GMAIL.COM

As CEO of Jenkins Wealth & Retirement Solutions, Charlene Jenkins is a Registered Financial Consultant and Certified Estate Planner with over 25 years of experience. Her background in probate and estate planning, paired with her deep faith, fuels her passion for guiding clients with care and integrity.

"I try my best for every client. It's very satisfying to know I'm making a difference," says Charlene, adding that she specializes in annuities and income planning, helping clients build lifetime security.

"My products allow you to self-create your own pension with income riders attached to what I do."

She also champions early saving through Roth IRAs. "If you can have something non-taxable in retirement, it's better for you."

Charlene's approach is never sales focused. "I explain, I answer questions and I make sure clients' investments and retirement vehicles will last them their lifetime. I want every person I work with to feel confident and cared for."

CURATED *Travel* FOR LIFE'S BEST CHAPTER

Departure Depot 

is where exceptional journeys begin.

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE



Outside, the sun has faded over the sweeping desert horizon. But inside The Sphere, you're completely immersed in another dimension, reveling in waves of sound and emotion.

A phenomenal high-resolution LED display literally wraps up, over and around you. Of course, the audio is out of this world. You can feel it pulsing from head to toe. Who could sit through this? Not you! It's The Eagles live and you're on your feet singing along with "Hotel California," "Take It Easy," "Desperado," song after hit song from your private, all-inclusive suite with the best seat in the house.

This isn't just a concert. It's a Bucket List event. And you're living it.

Even better? You have days ahead to explore Las Vegas before heading home. No stress. No logistics. Just joy, luxury, and unforgettable memories.

This is the kind of unforgettable experience that Departure Depot

curates—effortless, extraordinary, tailor-made travel.

INSPIRING A NEW ERA OF 55+ TRAVEL

Departure Depot believes travel should be seamless, and enriching—especially for the 55+ community. The mission is to empower active adult travelers to explore the world with ease, confidence, and connection.

Whether it's an island-hopping cruise, a concert under the stars, or a wine-filled weekend getaway, Departure Depot is redefining what it means to travel well after 55, by providing customized all-inclusive experiential travel, including:

- Luxury resort stays
- Live concerts and performances
- Cruise adventures
- Sporting events and golf getaways
- Food and culinary explorations
- Seasonal festivals and special events

These all-inclusive, curated excursions take the angst out

of travel and leave only the best parts—memory making and fun.

JOURNEY OF A VISIONARY

Before founding Departure Depot in The Villages, Douglas Colson spent years behind the scenes of the travel industry, working with global booking giants like Priceline and Expedia. He mastered the systems, learned the secrets of wholesale resort inventory, and built relationships with elite cruise lines and hospitality brands.

"The light bulb moment came 15 years ago," Douglas recalls. "I realized I knew where to find all the wholesale travel inventory—resorts, condos, cruises—and I wanted to use that knowledge to serve the 55+ community in The Villages."

In 2018, he launched Lifestyle Cruise & Tours, curating unforgettable group trips. One major breakthrough came when Jimmy Buffett's team asked him to help promote their new cruise line.

"My wife and I have done several cruises and events with Departure Depot, and every one has gone without a snag. The staff is very personable and professional. These cruises and events are a bargain."

ANDY SMITH, THE VILLAGES

"Departure Depot offers concierge service to active travelers. From cruises to sporting events, to concerts, they provide excellent packages and service. The Margaritaville at Sea Islander out of Tampa is a beautiful ship that is the right size for those of us who prefer smaller cruise lines. Departure Depot handles everything, from transportation to the port, expedited boarding, special package pricing and always, exterior cabins."

BETH ROWLEY, THE VILLAGES

Travelers SPEAK UP





We specialize in curated group travel for discerning travelers and small groups of around 36 people,

-Douglas Colson

"We did 71 departures in three years, and I personally joined 69 of those," says Douglas.

Building on that success, in 2024 he launched Departure Depot—a boutique travel company offering white-glove, experiential trips tailored for active adults who crave adventure without hassle. This endeavor was the final piece of the puzzle that truly represented all of the different travel styles under one brand, bringing together his vision for seamless, adventurous, and personalized travel experiences.

"Fifteen years ago, there weren't a lot of curated, experiential Bucket List travel opportunities in The Villages. I went on a quest to find the cool stuff and make it available. We spent a lot of time evolving into who we are. This was a niche and there's a demand for our services in the 55+ community,"

says Douglas, who was born and raised in Leesburg.

Being a well-versed world traveler gives him a definite edge in planning curated travel journeys.

"I'm doing exactly what I would want to do if I were retired—and I'm loving every minute of it," Douglas says.

"These moments matter. You only have so many healthy, active summers left. Don't put it off. Go have some fun—you've earned it."

CONCIERGE-STYLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

Departure Depot is more than a travel agency. It's a concierge travel hub with a storefront in Wildwood, Florida, and a robust online booking platform. Their unique model combines insider access, personalized service, and unbeatable value.

You can make an appointment to meet with expert advisors in person. Join the monthly "Let's Travel" Info Sessions or plan a custom trip over coffee.

"People want face-to-face interaction so that's why we opened a retail location," says Douglas. "If you're planning on taking an African safari, you're not going to book this online.

You want to talk with someone about all the details."

Thanks to long-standing industry contracts, Departure Depot offers over 4,000 resort condos worldwide at prices not available to the public. From private group getaways to once-in-a-lifetime solo adventures, every trip is curated to reflect your interests.

CUSTOMIZED TRIPS

Want to travel with your club, church group, or circle of friends? Just describe your dream trip. Departure Depot can design a custom experience based on your vision.

If you're an independent explorer, their self-service model empowers travelers who love to chart their own course. Browse and book on the website with access to resort inventory, flight deals, and travel insurance—all backed by support from the concierge team.

"We specialize in curated group travel for discerning travelers and small groups of around 36 people," notes Douglas. "We bundle the entire experience end-to-end with a thoughtfully crafted itinerary that has the perfect balance of exploration, comfort and connection. We're not about prepackaged tours. Each journey is thoughtfully designed, all-inclusive, and stress-free—just show up and enjoy."

BECOME A TRAVEL AMBASSADOR

Do you love traveling and connecting with others? Departure Depot is seeking 15 to 20 trip ambassadors to host unforgettable journeys and earn complimentary travel.

"We're also looking for independent travel agents to help us grow our portfolio of experiential travel products," says Douglas. "If you're organized, passionate, and inspired, let's talk."

Discover your next adventure

Ready to turn your next vacation into the experience of a lifetime? Drop by Departure Depot's travel lounge in

Wildwood or browse curated trips online. Just bring your dreams—they'll handle everything else.



Upcoming ADVENTURES

Most curated trips sell out because the inventory is limited. Here's a peek at some of the trips now booking.



MARGARITAVILLE AT SEA ISLANDER

 **Aug 31 – Sep 7, 2025**

 **7-night cruise to the Florida Keys, Mexico and Belize**

Luxury motor coach transport to and from the port is included as you embark on this magical week at sea. From strolling Duval Street in Key West, to exploring the world's second-largest coral reef in Belize, you'll also experience Costa Maya and Cozumel. Enjoy exploring Mayan ruins, diving, shopping, sipping an adult beverage while sunbathing on pristine white-sand beaches—or all of the above. Plus, the Margaritaville cruise ship features 12 dining venues, 13 bars and lounges, a St. Somewhere spa and fitness center, all-new Margaritaville Casino, live music enclaves, all-ages lounge and arcade, and four distinct outdoor pool zones.

SENIOR PGA EVENT (CHAMPIONS TOUR)

 **October 1 – 3, 2025**

 **Furyk and Friends Golf Tournament at the Exclusive Timuquana Country Club in Jacksonville, FL**

Travel by deluxe motor coach and spend two nights and three days in 4-star lodging at World Golf Village. Take in the legends and rising stars at this popular PGA Tour Champions event from your VIP open-air pavilion complete with all-inclusive food and beverages. Hit the links and enjoy a complimentary round of golf at the King and Bear Golf Club or the Slammer and Squire Club, or take a St. Augustine day tour.

CHRISTMAS AT BILTMORE AND CANDLELIGHT TOUR

 **December 6 - 9th, 2025**

 **Asheville, NC**

Savor an extra helping of Christmas magic on this festive Blue Ridge Mountain escape that includes a 4-day, 3-night deluxe stay at Embassy Suites by Hilton Asheville. The Biltmore Estate has been a beloved Holiday tradition for decades, so make the most of your Candlelight Christmas House and Grounds ticket. Explore the town with a Hop-on Hop-off Asheville Trolley Tour and take in the stunning winter lights at the NC Arboretum.

The Villages® Pepper Tree Plaza
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letstravel@departuredepot.com

Departure Depot 

DOUGLAS
COLSON



A LEGACY *in* FOCUS



“Although he isn’t here physically, seeing his face in the photos gives me comfort in the tough moments and laughter when I remember the memories of him. I look at him in these photos and know that he still lives in me. For that, I am grateful.”

— DE’ANA

Through one woman’s lens, her dad’s love lives on.

STORY: ROXANNE BROWN

PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL

Tiffany Brown has always had a passion for photography, a love instilled in her by her father, a devoted firefighter of 30-plus years with the fire department in Jackson, Mississippi.

Charles “Tony” Davis was the family’s documentarian, always capturing moments—big and small—on film. Looking back, Tiffany says having their picture taken by her dad became a regular part of everyday life for her, her kids, her sisters De’Ana and Jasmine, their mom Vera, and everyone who knew him.

When he gave Tiffany her first camera, he unknowingly set her on a path that would one day lead to the creation of something deeply meaningful: Lens of Luv.

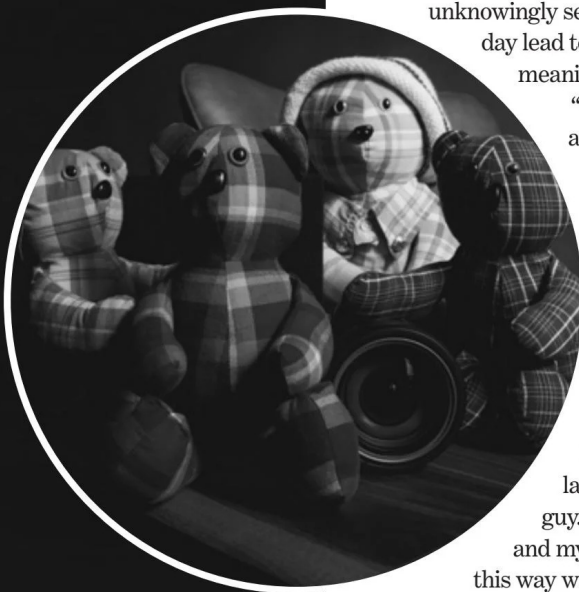
“He was always the one recording and just documenting life with us, so a lot of that insight into photography and the love for it came from him,” Tiffany says with a smile.

“I remember he even had one of those really huge camcorders that you set up on your shoulder and put a VHS tape into. You knew it was rolling because of the flashing red light,” she says, laughing. “My dad was a total tech guy. He always got the latest gadgets and my interest in documenting things this way was from him.”

Three years ago, Tiffany’s world changed when her father was diagnosed with small-cell lung cancer. By the time she received the news, it had already progressed to stage four. The doctors told the family he only had about six months to live, if that.

After hearing the diagnosis, Tiffany instinctively picked up her camera. The first photo she took was of her parents holding one another, tears streaming down her dad’s face.

“As a little girl, you grow up seeing your daddy as this strong, unshakable figure, and then



suddenly he's embracing my mom and he's crying," Tiffany recalls through tears, unable to continue for a few seconds as she composes herself. "It was raw, it was vulnerable and it was real."

From then on, Tiffany documented everything—his moments with family, hospital visits, the good days and the bad. Photography became her way of preserving his story. It was a way to feel close to him even after he passed on April 10, 2022, eight days before Tiffany's 40th birthday.

"I took that first shot and from there is when I started documenting his entire cancer journey. Every time I would go home, every time he was with the kids, and it just became a part of his legacy."

One particularly emotional memory stands out. Near the end of Tony's battle, the hospital wouldn't allow the grandkids to visit him in his room. Determined to give them one last moment together, Tiffany nonchalantly wheeled him into the hall, down the elevator and outside where his grandkids were waiting to share what would become their final goodbye with their grandpa, or "Gaga" as they call him. These were the moments that mattered, and



Tiffany says she's glad she was able to capture as many of them as possible.

"My kids love hearing that story of how I broke their Gaga out of his room every time they look at those pictures," she says, brushing her dad's face in the album as if he was sitting in front of her.

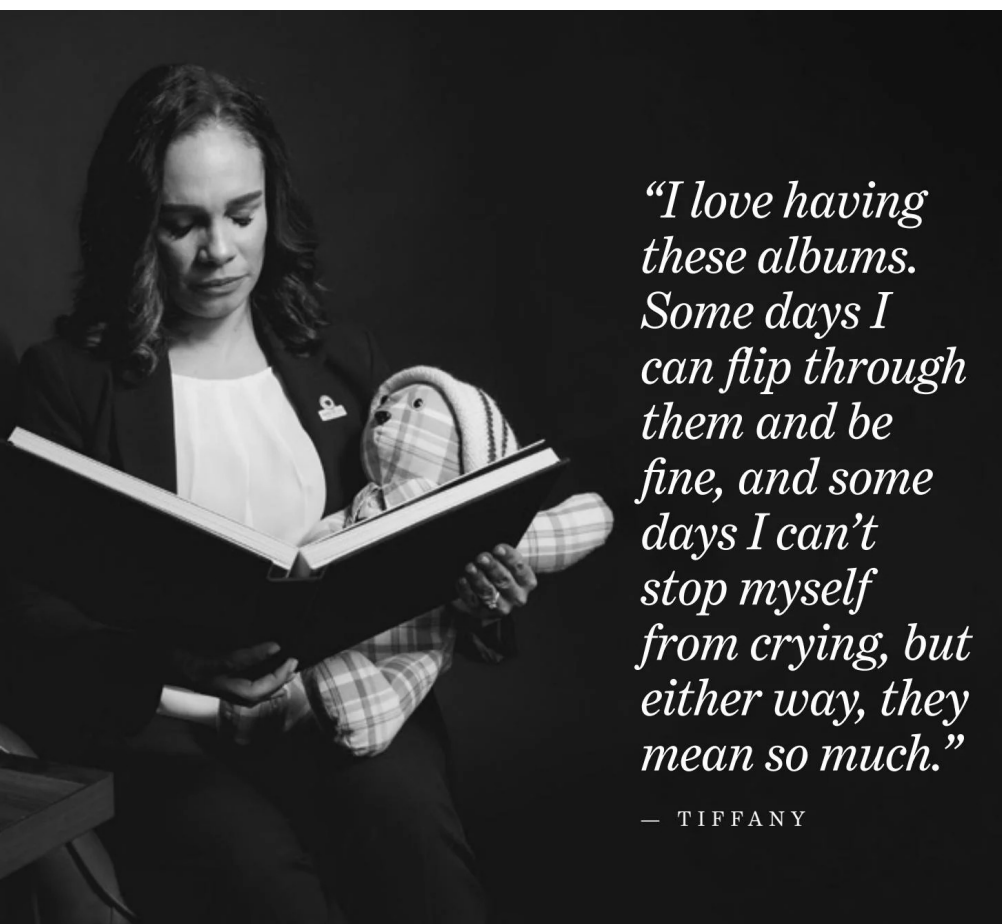
In her eyes, two images stand out as the essence of documentary photography. The first is a photo of one of her sisters kneeling at the side of her dad's hospital bed, holding his hand and crying as she asks for his forgiveness for anything she'd said or



done that may have ever hurt him. You can't see her dad's face in the photo, just his outstretched hand in hers, but the peace and calmness exuding from her sister's face, eyes closed, speaks volumes.

The second photo shows one of her sisters in a chair in front of their dad's bed, just sitting quietly, looking down at





"I love having these albums. Some days I can flip through them and be fine, and some days I can't stop myself from crying, but either way, they mean so much."

— TIFFANY

her laptop, ready and waiting patiently in case he should need anything.

"I love having these albums. Some days I can flip through them and be fine, and some days I can't stop myself from crying, but either way, they mean so much."

Tiffany's children Carson and Madison say although looking at Gaga's albums sometimes make them feel a little sad because of how much they miss him, the photos also bring back good memories. De'Ana, Tiffany's middle sister, considers the albums priceless.

"Having photos of my dad means so much to me. They seem simple, but they are more than what meets the eye. Because I have these photos, I get to see him every day," D'Ana says. "Although he isn't here physically, seeing his face in the photos gives me comfort in the tough moments and laughter when I remember the memories of him. I look at him in these photos and know that he still lives in me. For that, I am grateful."

Tiffany's experience documenting her father's journey made her reflect on how many families, overwhelmed

by the emotional toll of cancer, don't think to take photos—and later, wish they had.

She soon realized she could do that for others. The images she captured of her dad became a source of comfort, healing and a lasting connection to his legacy. That realization led to the birth of Lens of Luv, a nonprofit organization offering free photography and documentation services to families of first responders battling cancer.

"Some families might just want a happy, beautiful family shoot," Tiffany explains. "Others might want to document the entire journey—the love, the strength, the ups and downs. It's completely up to them. This is about honoring their story in the way that feels right to them."

Lens of Luv is a nonprofit organization operating out of Clermont that provides not just photography sessions, but heirloom-quality albums, printed on thick pages that become cherished keepsakes for such families.

To make sure as many families as possible receive this gift, Tiffany is seeking donations and volunteer

photographers who share her mission—and, perhaps, the experience of losing someone they love to cancer. She believes those who have walked that path bring a unique depth of empathy to the work.

"If you've been through it, you just see things differently. You know what moments matter," Tiffany says, adding that she hopes to spread the word and reach more families in need.

Lens of Luv is built on the belief that love, strength and resilience deserve to be remembered. Tiffany knows firsthand how powerful it is to have images to look back on—to celebrate a life, to mourn, to remember and to heal.

More than just photography, Lens of Luv is a tribute to the unbreakable spirit of first responders and their families. Through her father's legacy, Tiffany is making sure that others facing similar journeys won't be left wondering, "What if we had taken more pictures?" Instead, they'll have a collection of memories—captured with love—that will live on forever.

"We consult with the families, we see what they would like to have done, what best serves the patient's legacy because these photos are going to be a part of it and their children's too," she says.

For more information, to donate or volunteer toward Tiffany's cause, visit lensofluv.org.



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4 |  2 |  2 | 



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AGENDA

EVENTS
TRAVEL
PEOPLE

LOCAL TALENT

In a swirl of color and connection, Sandra Fox paints a joyful new chapter in Florida.





MAY
24

FESTIVAL

One Love

Red, Gold & Green Productions present the Clermont Reggae Festival, on Saturday, May 24, 1-9pm. Immerse yourself in Jamaican foods, music and culture and dance to Roots, Dub, Ska and Dancehall.

→ 9117 Jack Underwood Rd., Clermont / Tickets and information available on Eventbrite and AllEvents

2025

may



EVENT

Run, Walk, Care

Hands of Hope America presents: Run for Hope 5K/Walk for Change 5K. This run/fundraiser will raise money for critical issues affecting our community such as mental health services, food insecurity, homelessness and youth services.

→ Lake Louise State Park
7305 US Hwy. 27 Clermont
handsofhopeamerica.org
352.432.3824

BETTER
RESOURCES/SERVICES

HOMELESSNESS

FOOD INSECURITY

MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS



EVENT

GIRLS NIGHT OUT

Grab your besties, moms, sisters and daughters for the Fourth Annual Whimsy Market's Mother's Day Market from 5-8pm Thursday, May 8 at the Venetian Center in Leesburg. Make it a day to remember by supporting local women-led businesses and celebrating women, shopping and fun! Crafts, food trucks and adult beverages will be available.

→ 1 Dozier Cir., Leesburg / Eventeny.com



MAY
8

ONGOING EVENTS

Events are subject to change and cancellation.

EVERY WEEKEND	EVERY MON	EVERY TUE	EVERY THU	1ST FRI	1ST FRI	EVERY SUN
Lakeridge Winery presents: Weekends at the Winery 10am-5pm Sat. 11am-5pm Sun. 19239 US 27, Clermont	Webster Farmers Market 6am-2pm 524 N. Market Blvd., Webster	Lady Lake Farmers Market 9am-2pm 250 Rolling Acres Rd., Lady Lake	Lake County Farmers and Flea Market 8am-noon 2101 N. CR 452, Eustis	Eustis First Friday 6-9pm Downtown Eustis	Clermont First Friday Food Trucks 5:30-9pm 685 W. Montrose St., Clermont	Downtown Clermont Farmers Market 9am-2pm Downtown Clermont





THE TO-DO LIST

may ON STAGE

Enjoy quality entertainment on the many stages of Lake and Sumter counties.

MID-CENTURY MELTDOWN 5/16-6/8

In the play *Red Herring* by Michael Hollinger, it's 1952 America is on the verge of the H-bomb, Dwight Eisenhower is on the campaign trail and "I Love Lucy" dominates Monday nights. This hilarious noir comedy follows three love stories, a murder mystery and a case of nuclear espionage all wrapped up in a tale about marriage and other explosive devices.

The Sonnentag Theatre at the Ice House
1100 N. Unser St., Mount Dora / 352.383.4616
icehousetheatre.com



THE GODS MUST BE LAUGHING 5/2-5/18

Daphne and Ralph are young classics professors and have just made a discovery that promises to catapult them to academic stardom. But when things take a disastrous turn, Daphne, in a moment of panic, cries out, "Save me, gods of ancient Greece!" To her shock, the gods actually answer. In *The Gods of Comedy* by Ken Ludwig, the Ivy League is turned upside down as two mischievous deities navigate the chaos of college life, encounter campus scandals, clueless coeds and a world of modern excess.

The Melon Patch Players
122 W. Main St., Leesburg / 352.787.3013
melonpatchplayers.com



MAY
12

MAY
19

MAY
26

FESTIVAL

Bingo with a Twist!

Grab your dabber every Monday night and play Boozy Bingo under the stars 5-8pm at Sawgrass Grove in The Villages, located just north of Eastport. Music categories include: tunes from the decades, classic rock, ladies of the 80's and more @

→ 766 Marilee Pl., The Villages / thevillagesentertainment.com

Let us help you get the word out!

→ To have an event considered for the calendar, send a short text description along with a color photo (if available) 45 days in advance of event to: calendar@akersmediagroup.com or Lake & Sumter Style Calendar, P.O. Box 490088, Leesburg, FL 34749

ONGOING EVENTS Events are subject to change and cancellation.

MON & FRI NIGHTS

**Car Shows
in The Villages**
5-8pm
Lake Sumter Landing &
Brownwood Paddock Square

EVERY FRI

Groveland Farmers Market
9am-1pm
Lake David Park

EVERY SUN

**Downtown Mount Dora
Village Market**
9am-2pm
Downtown Mount Dora

SECOND SAT

Plaid in the Park
5-9pm
230 W. 4th Ave., Mount Dora

EVERY SAT

**Spanish Springs
Mercado Outdoor
Market & Music**
9am-2pm

1ST & 3RD WEEK

**Market Night
in The Villages**
5-9pm
Tue-Spanish Springs
Wed-Lake Sumter
Thu-Brownwood

mayJAMS

Move to the beat of your favorite performers at these great concerts or local venues!

5/2 @ 7pm

WOMEN OF ROCK

The Clermont Performing Arts Center, Clermont

5/3 @ 7pm

FIREFALL

The Savannah Center, The Villages

5/3 @ 2:30pm & 7pm

JOHN CONLEE

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/4 @ 7pm

THE EVERLY BROTHERS EXPERIENCE

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/6 @ 3pm

MICHELLE INGRHAM

Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

5/7 @ 7pm

ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN

The Sharon, The Villages

5/9-10 @ 4 & 7pm

DIRECT FROM SWEDEN:

THE MUSIC OF ABBA

The Savannah Center, The Villages

5/10 @ 7pm

JIMMY, JIM & JAMES: MUSIC OF

BUFFET, CROCE AND TAYLOR

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/10 @ 7pm

THE VILLAGES PHILHARMONIC

The Sharon, The Villages

5/11 @ 7pm

VINTAGE VIXENS

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/12 @ 3pm

SCOOTER THE D.J.

Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

5/15 @ 7pm

CLASSIC COUNTRY

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/16 @ 7pm

MILLION DOLLAR MCGRAW,

The Savannah Center, The Villages

5/17 @ 7pm

END OF THE INNOCENCE

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/18 @ 12pm

ACOUSTIC BLUE

Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

5/22 @ 6pm

A TRIBUTE TO STEVIE WONDER

Whispering Oaks Winery, Oxford

5/22 @ 4pm

DALE STUMBO

Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

5/24 @ 7pm

GEORGE TRULLINGER VARIETY SHOW

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/24 @ 7pm

ROCKIE LYNNE

The Sharon, The Villages

5/25 @ 12pm

NICOLE EQUERME

Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

5/31 @ 7pm

LIVE & LET DIE, MUSIC OF

PAUL MCCARTNEY

The Orange Blossom Opry, Weirsdale

5/31 @ 4pm

JERSEY FRANK

Edna's on the Green, Wildwood

ONGOING EVENTS

Events are subject to change and cancellation.

2NDSAT

**Main Street
Classic Car Show**

5-9pm
510 W. Main St., Leesburg

4THSAT

**Eustis Classic Car
Cruise-in**

4-8pm
Downtown Eustis

2NDFRI

**Second Friday
Farmers Market**

5-9pm
Lake David Park, Groveland

1STSAT

Brown's Junk in the Trunk

13940 US 301, Oxford
(Use the field gate
south of Brown's Country
Store on Hwy. 301)

SATURDAYS

**Villages Farmers
Market Brownwood**

Paddock Square
9am-2pm

EVERY MON

**Boozy Bingo
at Sawgrass Grove**

5-8pm
766 Marilee Pl., The Villages



LOCAL TALENT

PEOPLE

Artistically Inclined

Sandra Fox paints a colorful outlook top of form.

STORY: CYNTHIA MCFARLAND × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL



Sandra Fox's creative side has enhanced every aspect of her life—from career to hobby.

"My father was an upholsterer and made furniture from scratch. He also made fabric

sculptures, which were very unusual, so I'd say I got my artistic tendencies from him," says Sandra, who was always doodling and drawing as a child, but got serious about art in high school.

Growing up in New York City, she attended the High School of Art and Design. She wasn't painting yet, but loved drawing and multi-media art, such as paper sculpture.

After earning her master's degree in Education of the Deaf at NYU, Sandra had her dream job for the next three decades, teaching art at the New York City School for the Deaf.

"I had students of all ages from kindergarten through high school. Deaf people are visual learners, so they could express themselves through art as well as sign language," says Sandra, who learned sign language to teach them.

She and her husband, Howard, a pharmacist, raised two sons, Robert and James, who gave them two

granddaughters and one grandson.

During the 30 years she was teaching, Sandra always took additional art and computer graphics classes. She especially liked silk painting, which she learned in 1985.

Sandra retired in 2002. She and Howard moved to Central Florida in 2007; he passed in 2020.

Sandra participates in fine art shows at The Plantation at Leesburg, where she lives. Among her favorite subjects are animals, and she enjoys doing commissioned pet portraits.

"Right now, I'm more into colored pencil and mixed media, like collages that incorporate painting. I'm also doing Gelli printing, so I create my own customized paper to use in my collages," she says of the process that allows her to make one-of-a-kind prints featuring texture and patterns enhanced by vivid colors.

It makes sense that Sandra's social circle includes art. She's at Leesburg Center for the Arts every week for open studio and also belongs to Ocala Art Group.

Although Sandra works on her art several days a week, she also stays busy with other pursuits, including keeping up with sign language through online classes and exercises. She was proficient in sign language as an art teacher of the deaf but makes it a point to practice so her skills don't get rusty.

For commissioned work, contact her at [@sandyfox301@gmail.com](mailto:sandyfox301@gmail.com)



Know of a talented person in our community?

→ Email their story to editorial@akersmediagroup.com.



CYNTHIA MCFARLAND

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Leesburg Police Department



Jay Hall, Ben Roche,
Lydia Hall & Adam Bolton



Aysia Harris, Jeanelle
Henderson & Sue Murphy



Traci Gamble, Ed Genter, Shea
Aldrich & Brian Gamble



Samantha, Jason, Walter,
Tom, Anthony & Jasmine



Leesburg Fire Fighters (LAFF Local 2957)



Whitney Law, Gunner Glover, Jeffrey Glover, Chelsea Giles & Elizabeth Sellers



Jason Garven,
Jason & Danielle Reynolds



Laura, Ryan
& Rylan Peterson



Noah, Gail, Katie, Jimmy & Trey Burry



Church of the Lakes

HURT SO GOOD

@ LEESBURG × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL

The 10th annual Burn in the Burg Chili Cook-Off took place on November 2 in Historic Downtown Leesburg. People's Choice winners included: 1st place—Northgate Animal Clinic, 2nd place—Leesburg Police Department, 3rd place—Gator Harley-Davidson. The Judge's Choice award went to United Southern Bank, while Habitat for Humanity took home the prize for Best Decorated Booth. Special thanks to the “Some Like It Hot” sponsors, Preferred Insurance and Vermeer and the “Fire Burning” sponsor, United Southern Bank. Media sponsors LakeFront TV and New Paradigm were also on-site for the festivities. Hundreds of chili lovers from across Lake County and beyond enjoyed a day filled with great food and live music by Naughty Naughty. @

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Aron Grogan
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Harold Bosch,
Karla Catala
& Sara Molina



Justin Sparapani, Ollie Mei, Danica Rockwood,
Duy Truong, Alyson Tabbitha, Jenna Pávilic,
Justin Calvo, Ida Vesterelv & Aundi Moore



Mike Tell



Jason Williams



Mollie McMahon



Feycrafts, Cassandracosplays,
Regal Coral, Auntie Lanae & Cafededuy



Tatiana Perez-Rivera & Alana Carter



Vivian Long & Tyler Peterkin

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'T WAS A PLEASURE

@ TAVARES × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL

The annual Lady of the Lakes Renaissance Faire, presented by the Marian D. Shuck Scholarship Trust, took place in Tavares in November. The event that benefitted the Education Foundation of Lake County transported visitors back in time with turkey legs, mead and dozens of performances inspired by days of yore. The faire was made possible through the support of sponsors including the City of Tavares, **Style Magazine**, Lake County Schools, Waste Management and Insight. Lords and ladies wandered the shire, browsing artisan wares such as sculptures, swords, candles, jewelry, pottery, leatherwork and kilts. Last year, the Education Foundation of Lake County impacted nearly 3,000 teachers and almost 60,000 students, with over \$4 million invested in education through the faire over the years. @

Your **Heart** Health Matters

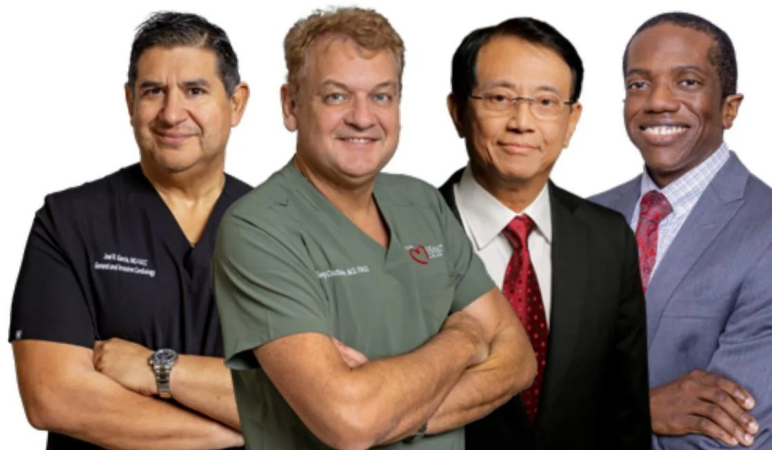
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Dan Delgado, Mike Brown, Richard Held, Phil Braun & Andrew Holiday



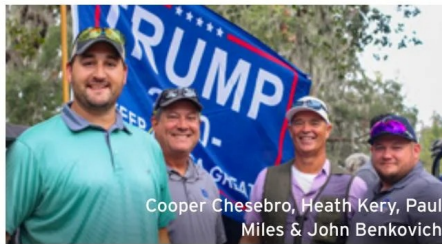
Daniel & Tess Loeffel, Rebecca & Brandon Bronson



Cathy Reardon, Jessica Nguyen-Smith & Shelly Scarbrough



Brian Duffey, Chris Josselyn & Mike Keogh



Cooper Chesebro, Heath Kery, Paul Miles & John Benkovich



Eddie Primeau, Tim Phillips, Charlie Pritt, Nicole Smith & James Thomason



Ashley Simmons & Nancy Hernandez



Woody Brazil, Carey Baker, Gary Cooney & Charlie Taylor



Mike Machovsky, Andre Nacaxe, Brad VanSlyke & Jason McHugh



Jonathan Germeroth & Senator Keith Truenow



Nathan Strickland & Gregory Copen

RIGHT ON TARGET

@ SUMTERVILLE × PHOTOS: MATTHEW GAULIN

The 5th annual Bourbon, BBQ & Bustin' Clays took place at Blackjack Sporting Clays in Sumterville on November 14. This annual sporting clay fundraiser supports a cause that directly impacts the well-being of the Leesburg community. UF Health Leesburg Hospital Heart and Vascular Center is proud to host the event, which has quickly become a favorite among local sporting shooters and enthusiasts. A special thanks to Williamson Cases for their handcrafted leather goods, Amanda Vernor of Heavy Metalz Studio and Breakfast at Tiffany's for providing a delicious breakfast, as well as Mission BBQ for serving up lunch for this year's participants. @

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of HOMES**
2025

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- Mastropiece
- Mastrosimone Construction
- Park Square Homes
- Premier Pool Contractor
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- Taylor Morrison
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- Trident Construction
- Westmont Custom Homes
- White Aluminum & Windows

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- **Industry Partner:** Realtors Association of Lake & Sumter Counties
- **Community Partner:** Habitat for Humanity Lake-Sumter, Florida
- **Awards Banquet Bar Sponsor:** ODC Construction



PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

There are certain projects that homeowners can safely tackle themselves. Major tree work isn't one of those tasks.

When it comes to tree trimming, removal and storm damage restoration, the safest, most efficient option is to call in the experts. In Central Florida, that means calling Airborne Tree Service.

From residential to commercial, Airborne Tree Service handles all types of tree and vegetation concerns. Based in Summerfield, the business provides service and disaster relief across Central Florida from Valdosta to Tampa and Orlando.

Mike Davis Sr. launched Airborne in 1985. His son Mike Davis Jr. has worked with the company since 2004 and took the reins when his dad retired in 2023.

"My grandfather also cut trees, so we're actually going into the third

generation," says Mike Davis, Jr., who was born and raised in Ocala.

AIRBORNE TREE SERVICE IS FULLY EQUIPPED TO HANDLE ANY PROJECT RELATED TO TREES AND VEGETATION, INCLUDING:

- Emergency tree removal
- Tree trimming
- Routine maintenance to help prevent loss
- Stump grinding
- Power line and vegetation management
- Grapple truck services to haul debris

"What sets us apart is our equipment and having so many years of experience and knowledge," says

Mike. "We have state-of-the-art equipment and some of the biggest trucks. We have just about every piece of equipment imaginable for the tree industry and we have multiples. We don't sub out any work."

Many tree companies don't own crane trucks, so they have to hire them for jobs. This can lead to big delays in service when companies are swamped with work after storms.

"Our response time is fast because we have our own crane trucks," says Mike.

With a total of 10 trucks in service, Airborne has 3 crane trucks, 3 grapple trucks, a saw truck, mulch haulers, and an excavator.

Mike explains that a crane makes tree removal much safer and more efficient, especially in tricky

situations when a tree has fallen on a structure, or massive limbs are hanging over a house.

The company's grapple saw truck is a unique tool that can operate completely by remote control.

"This is helpful in dangerous conditions and helps minimize hazards, especially when a tree is dead, and you can't safely climb it. It's also useful for emergency mitigation work, like when a tree has fallen on a house. I can literally take a tree down while standing on the ground," says Mike.

The spider lift is another piece of equipment that helps the crew work in hard-to-reach spots.

"We still have guys who free climb trees when that is needed," notes Mike. "This is some of the most dangerous work, so we only use climbers on removals or trims that can't be accessed any other way."

In order to protect the tree, free climbers don't climb with spikes if the tree is being trimmed. Spikes can seriously damage a tree, so they only use spikes on a tree when it's going to be removed.

Having the right equipment is one thing; Airborne Tree Service also has the expertise to use that equipment.

"It's all about our team," says Mike, whose wife Danielle runs the office.

Trees are a very valuable asset to a property, especially when they're taken care of. Because Mike is a certified arborist, he has the knowledge and skill

to help preserve trees and can treat them with pesticides when needed.

Airborne also processes its own tree and vegetation material, turning it into a renewable resource, which keeps it from being burned or dumped in the landfill.

"We take care of multiple HOA properties. In addition to routine maintenance, we also provide clean-up after emergencies," says Mike.

He explains that prompt restoration and clean-up are vital after adverse weather events.

"We did the whole town of Cedar Key and ended up taking 650 grapple truckloads of debris out after Hurricanes Helene and Milton," says Mike, referring to the busy 2024 hurricane season.

Airborne helps with insurance claims—whether the homeowner or insurance company calls.

"We had 60 insurance claims just the last two hurricanes. When disaster hits, we're trying to get people back to normal as quickly as possible, so we often kick on the lights and even keep working after dark," says Mike.

"It's all about personal relationships with our customers. We'll come out to meet with you and do a free evaluation, tell you what should be done and provide an estimate," says Mike.

Financing is available through a third party when a client needs help paying for the service.

Airborne Tree Service is your trusted partner in caring for your property's trees.



Commercial services

HOMEOWNERS AREN'T THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO RELY ON AIRBORNE TREE SERVICE. COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT 50 PERCENT OF THE COMPANY'S BUSINESS, AND INCLUDE:

- Vegetation management
- Tree services
- Power line maintenance
- Emergency storm damage restoration
- Hauling and crane services



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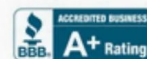
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IT'S ALL ABOUT



IMMUNITY

THE ULTIMATE WELLNESS CENTER

WELCOME TO IMMUNITY HEALTH

At Immunity Health Spa, we recognize that everyone who walks through our doors is a unique individual. No two people are alike or face identical challenges.

That's exactly why we've developed the highest quality personalized wellness plans and protocols to support your health goals.

We use state-of-the-art technologies and innovative treatments with scientific backing and proven protocols to optimize your health and wellbeing and support your immune system at any age or stage of life.

Whether you are looking to prevent, reverse or treat a serious illness or condition, enhance energy levels and fitness endurance, lose weight, improve your skin, or simply pamper yourself to be your best inside and out, Immunity Health Spa offers the ultimate wellness experience.



Now that we've moved into our larger location, we've expanded our menu of services to better support our clients.

FIND RELIEF FROM:

Autoimmune Conditions
Neurological Conditions
Low Immune System
Sleep Disturbances
Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue
Lyme Disease
Hair Loss
Depression and Anxiety
Performance and Energy Boost
Weight Gain and Loss
Hormone Dysfunction
Cognitive Decline
Premature Aging

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MEET THE *Team*



Immunity Health Spa has assembled a remarkable team of experts to assist each client on their wellness journey.



Sabrina Ciceri
FOUNDER/OWNER

Sabrina Ciceri sees medicine through a different lens and represents an evolution in health care, shifting the disease-centered focus of medicine to a more preventative approach. Her vast experience in the healthcare field was

the driving force behind opening this innovative company.

"We know that the body can heal itself when given the support it needs. I've seen thousands of people reverse major health disorders and terminal illness through giving the body support it needs to not just survive, but thrive," says Sabrina.

After spending 10 years working in conventional medicine as a nurse, she became fascinated with preventative health. Sabrina is also a certified fitness instructor who opened the first training studio in 2003 in her hometown. Since 2005, Sabrina has studied, researched, and learned about the preventative side of medicine and natural ways of healing the body. While working alongside medical experts at Hippocrates Wellness Center, a world-renowned holistic health institute in West Palm Beach, she spent countless

hours interviewing health professionals worldwide to help people achieve optimal health through preventative medicine.

She is also a Plant-based Health Educator. In 2008, Sabrina was part of a team that launched *Healthy Living Magazine*, named the "Best Overall Magazine" by the Florida Magazine Association, for nine years. Sabrina served as publisher of the *Hippocrates Wellness Healing Our World* magazine for four years.

She has served as a board member for several organizations, such as the American Cancer Society and LifeStream Behavioral Center, and the Central Florida Boys and Girls Club. Sabrina and her husband, Joe, enjoy spending time with their large family. They have fostered and adopted many children, and were named the 2014 Foster Parents of the Year by Kids Central Inc.



FUNCTIONAL *Wellness*

WHETHER YOU NEED DETAILED TESTING TO FIND SOLUTIONS, CONSULTATION REGARDING A CONCERN, OR A PERSONALIZED PLAN TO IMPROVE A SPECIFIC AREA OF HEALTH, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU AND OFFER:

- Nutritional Testing
- Gut Testing
- Comprehensive Hormone Testing
- Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy
- Food Allergy Testing
- GLP-1 Assisted Weight Loss Programs
- Nutritional Programs

Discover the path to health and vitality by booking a free health consultation. Our wellness team offers education and expert guidance so you can look and feel your best—inside and out. With a personalized plan, we can address any concerns, schedule any necessary testing, and create a treatment plan tailored to reach your individual health goals.

Why would you need to see a clinical nutritionist?

“When someone is not feeling up to par, and have gone the whole traditional route, but haven’t seen a turnaround, this is where clinical nutrition comes into play,” notes Katie Gravante, CL. N., CNC. “Through diagnostic testing I can look at micronutrient levels to see what’s going on in their body and how to help them heal from a natural standpoint.”

Clinical nutrition uses labs that are much more in-depth than the routine bloodwork ordered by your family doctor. One test takes an intracellular look at 33 different nutrients over a 4- to 6-month span to identify any deficiencies. For example, lacking in B-vitamins can cause blood sugar disturbances, while low amino acids can affect brain function. To remedy such deficiencies, the first step is identifying them.

If you’re curious whether your body is lacking nutritionally, this is the perfect reason to see a clinical nutritionist.



Katie Gravante
CLINICAL NUTRITIONIST

A clinical nutritionist who has worked in the medical field for 30 years in both traditional medicine and functional medicine.

“Medicine is changing, and the interest of functional medicine has really taken precedence,” says Katie. “A clinical nutritionist is not your traditional nutritionist. We focus more on healing the body through a diagnostic and holistic approach that entails supplementation along with dietary changes.”



Supplements

Immunity Health Spa offers the highest quality brands of supplements to help the body repair itself, prevent premature aging, and keep the immune system strong and ward off illness.

With a full menu of supplements, you'll find exactly what you need to address any concern. Not sure what you need? Our health experts are here to answer your questions.



Julio Ugarte, MD
MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Medical director Julio Ugarte, MD, is a family medicine physician with over 40 years of experience in the medical field. He uses both conventional and functional medicine in his integrated practice.

Clients appreciate Dr. Ugarte's expertise and how he takes the time to answer questions, explain conditions and recommended treatment options.

In addition to overseeing treatment plans as medical director, Dr. Ugarte will be working in the facility one day a week, which means he's able to offer more services to clients.

"I am happy to be a part of the team at Immunity and I believe in the services they offer to better optimize the overall health of the clients," says Dr. Ugarte.

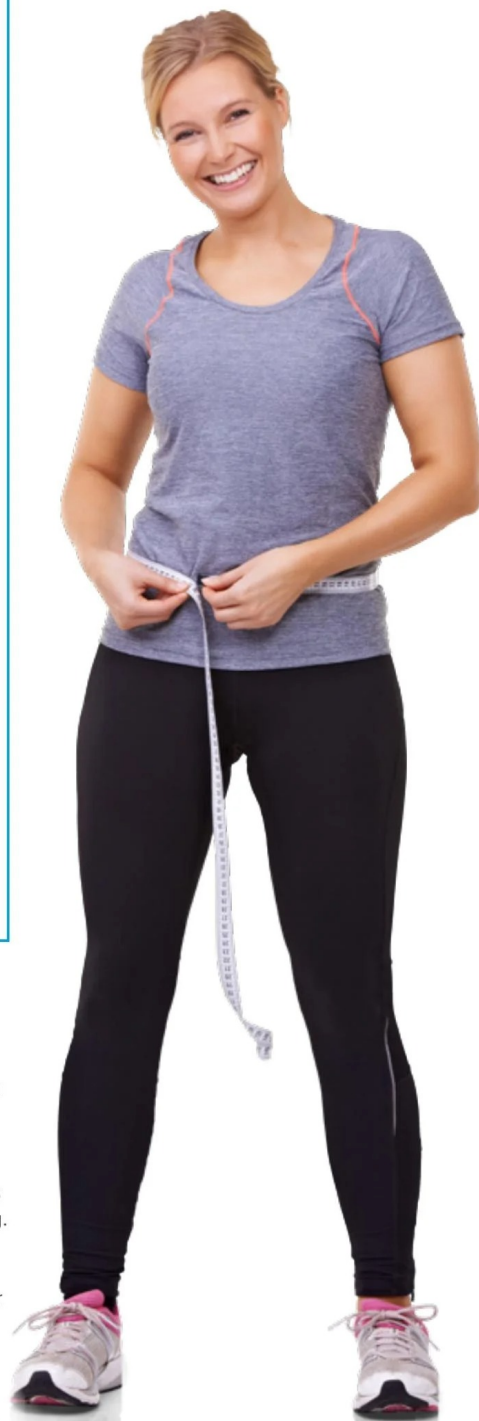
Weight Loss

Immunity Health Spa offers safe, effective coaching and supplementation along with the aid of GLP-1 peptide support without the chemical synthetic side effects. These cutting-edge treatments not only promote weight loss but also enhance your overall well-being.

Lipo Shots provide a powerful, safe, and effective way to accelerate your weight loss journey while boosting your immunity. Designed to break down fat, increase metabolism, and promote detoxification, our specially formulated Lipo Shots can help you achieve your weight loss goals quickly and safely. We offer proven results! Clients consistently report fat loss, increased energy, and improved overall wellness. Formulated with key nutrients such as Vitamin B12, amino acids, and other fat-burning compounds that work together.

When you combine the support of GLP one and detoxifying fat burning shot along with proper testing, nutritional guidance, and a holistic medical team to coach and support your journey towards better health, you will end up with long lasting results.

LET'S DISCUSS YOUR GOALS AND GET YOU ON THE PATH TO A HEALTHIER AND HAPPIER LIFE.



- **Boost Metabolism:** Burn fat faster and more effectively.
- **Increase Energy:** Fight fatigue and stay active longer.
- **Support Liver Function:** Flush out toxins and promote overall detoxification.
- **Enhance Immune Function:** Strengthen your immune system with essential vitamins and minerals.
- **Improve Mood and Mental Clarity:** Feel better inside and out as your body gets the nutrients it needs.

Colon HYDROTHERAPY

Colonics

Immunity Health Spa now offers state-of-the-art closed system colonics, a therapy that addresses a range of issues.

Colonic Hydrotherapy introduces filtered water into the colon at low pressure to flush out stagnant waste. This cleansing process helps break down and soften stool in the colon and stimulates its release.

10 Benefits of Colon Cleansing

| 1 |

Makes the Digestive
System more Effective

| 2 |

Maintains Regularity
and Prevents
Constipation

| 3 |

Kickstarts Weight Loss

| 4 |

Increases Energy

| 5 |

Improves Concentration

| 6 |

Decreases Risk of
Colon Cancer

| 7 |

Increases Body's
Absorption of Vitamins
and Minerals

| 8 |

Increases Fertility

| 9 |

Maintains pH balance in
the Bloodstream

| 10 |

Improves Whole
Body Wellbeing



Sexual WELLNESS

PHARMACEUTICALS AREN'T THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR SEXUAL HEALTH CONCERNS.

We offer non-invasive, drug-free, in-office therapy options to enhance performance, boost intimacy, and support sexual wellness.

Shockwave therapy is scientifically proven to treat the root cause, increase blood flow, restore healthy tissue, and

optimize sexual performance for pain-free, long-lasting results with zero downtime.

You can reignite sexual function, power-up performance, and supercharge overall health with shockwave therapy that involves no drugs or lasers. Get ready to experience the results!

For Him:

- Treats Erectile Dysfunction (ED)
- Treats Peyronie's Disease
- Optimizes Sexual Performance and Satisfaction

As men age, their blood flow decreases, sensitivity weakens, and blood vessels become narrower. Shockwave therapy utilizes high-frequency, low-intensity shockwaves to revitalize the affected area.

Shockwave for him breaks down micro-plaque, increases blood flow, and promotes the development of new blood vessels. Shockwave therapy stands out as an effective option because it targets the underlying cause of many penile issues—poor blood flow.

The treatment is safe for patients with underlying health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

For Her:

- Restores Vaginal Tissue
- Revives Natural Lubrication
- Increases Sensitivity
- Reduces Intercourse Pain
- Treats Urinary Incontinence
- Treats Overactive Bladder, Including Leakage Symptoms, Frequency, and Urgency

Low-intensity shockwave therapy is a clinically proven procedure that treats the root cause and increases blood flow to restore healthy tissue.

Helpful for women during and after menopause, Shockwave for her is non-invasive and is performed on the outer and inner labia. The therapy increases cell signaling in blood vessels, which stimulates blood flow to nerves and the vaginal lining and activates the growth of healthier vaginal tissue. This process, called neurogenesis, enhances sensitivity in the vagina and can make orgasms easier to achieve. Women can expect increased sensitivity and lubrication, as well as strengthening, tightening, and improved appearance, restoration of new vaginal tissue and strengthening of muscles to improve urinary incontinence.

While urinary incontinence and an overactive bladder are generally associated with aging, this can actually happen at any stage in a woman's life. Shockwave therapy has been clinically studied and successfully treated urinary incontinence and an overactive bladder by reducing bladder leakage, decreasing frequency and urgency, improving the pelvic floor, and regenerating bladder wall tissue.

Shockwave for him and Shockwave for her were created and tested along with our community of providers, using standardized protocols to ensure patient safety and optimum results. Shockwave therapy treatment is administered by a nationwide network of highly trained medical providers.



Vital NUTRIENTS

Our vital nutrients and vitamin therapies are compounded, preservative and synthetic-free, making them readily available and 100% absorbable into the body.

Whether you want to prevent or reverse a serious illness, boost your immunity, or rebalance and rehydrate your body after a long flight or heavy night, the right IV Drip provides a solution.

Our innovative process delivers vital vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and amino acids to help optimize overall wellbeing. You can trust that we use the highest-quality ingredients and that our drips are free of corn and preservatives.

Put your feet up and relax in our comfortable IV lounge as your IV Drip is administered.

Choose from a full menu of IV Drips, depending on your individual needs:

- Nutrients are Quickly Delivered Directly into Bloodstream
- Strengthens Your Immune Function
- Reduces Oxidative Stress
- Rebalances Fluid Intake
- Replenishes Essential Nutrients
- Boosts Energy Levels

LONGEVITY DRIP

- Boosts Immunity
- Detoxifies the Body
- Decreases Signs of Aging
- Increases Antioxidants
- Enhances Cognitive Function
- Revitalizes Hair and Skin

NAD+ DRIP

- Slows Down the Aging Process
- Boosts Metabolism
- Improves Mental Clarity
- Combats Fatigue and Increases Energy
- Supports Weight Loss
- Reduces Inflammation

PROFESSIONAL DRIP

- Boosts Mental Clarity and Focus
- Re-Energizes and Revitalizes
- Combats Fatigue and Stress
- Enhances Recovery from Jet Lag and Travel
- Rehydrates the Body
- Accelerates Physical Recovery

REVIVE DRIP

- Energizes the Whole Body
- Supports the Immune System
- Enhances Mental and Physical Wellness
- Hydrates and Nourishes
- Reduces Pain and Inflammation
- Combats Infections and Viruses

FIT DRIP

- Enhances Active Recovery
- Optimizes Physical and Mental Wellbeing
- Boosts Stamina and Performance
- Strengthens Muscles and Joints
- Powerful Antioxidant
- Anti-Inflammatory



VITAMIN C DRIP

- Powerful Antioxidant
- Boosts Immune System
- Increases Energy Levels
- Helps Prevent Colds, Flu and Infections
- Enhances Collagen Production
- Protects Cells from Oxidative Stress
- Powerful Antioxidant
- Boosts Immune System
- Increases Energy Levels
- Helps Prevent Colds, Flu and Infections
- Enhances Collagen Production
- Protects Cells from Oxidative Stress

DEFENSE DRIP

- Supports Optimal Immune Function
- Increases Resilience to Illness
- Potent Antioxidant
- Enhances Cardiovascular Function
- Combats Signs of Stress
- Helps to Maintain a Healthy Nervous System

ALA DRIP

- Anti-Aging
- Enhances Weight Loss and Metabolism
- Protects Liver Health
- Improves Cognitive Function and Memory
- Promotes Healthy Nerve Function
- Removes Toxins from the Body

REJUVENATION DRIP

- Improves Skin and Nails
- Supports and Detoxes the Liver
- Enhances Energy
- Boosts Heart and Immune Function
- Reverses Aging
- Hydrates the Body



Juice bar

It's not easy to keep all the ingredients on hand to provide a concentrated dose of nutrients and antioxidants, so we've done it for you.

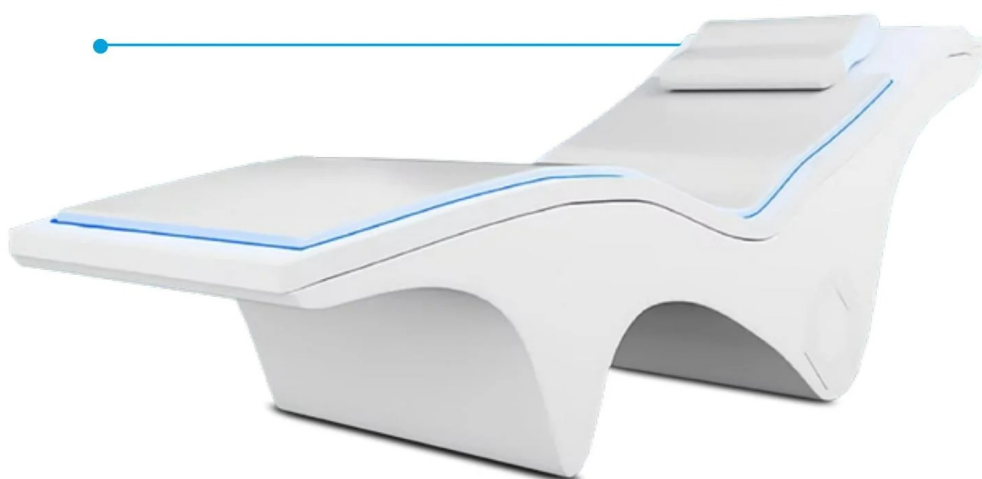
Stop by the Immunity Juice Bar before or after treatment—or any time you're in the neighborhood. Fuel up with a protein shake, boost your body with a concentrated wellness shot, or choose from a variety of other tantalizingly fresh options.

Menu includes:

- Cold-Pressed Juices
- Aloe Juice
- Wheatgrass Shots
- Detox Shakes
- Protein Shakes
- Protein Bars

Innovative THERAPIES

Take advantage of our proven modalities to address a wide range of concerns. Not sure which therapies you should use? We're here to advise and help create plans for both treatment and maintenance.



VIBROACOUSTIC ELECTROMAGNETIC INFRARED: VEMI Bed

VibroAcoustic ElectroMagnetic Infrared is a safe, non-invasive whole-body therapy to facilitate healing. It also creates a tangible sense of calm that permeates the body, brain, and mind.

VEMI Bed therapy enhances the body's ability to heal itself by creating a point of high physical, mental, and cellular coherence without emitting any harmful electrosmog (EMF) radiation. This allows the body to shift into a parasympathetic (rest and digest) state for 8-12 hours, during which the body may experience profound levels of healing to recharge and detoxify all the cells to support optimal health and wellbeing without disruptive EMF radiation. Removing harmful electrosmog (EMF radiation) from the body and surrounding environment is essential for healing. Disruptive frequencies have encouraged ill health and disease for generations, so removing this electrosmog helps to evoke a significant and notably positive effect on the whole body.

You'll wear comfortable clothes, lie on the VEMI Bed, and relax.

BENEFITS

- Deep Relaxation and Healing
- Long-Lasting Effects Post-Treatment
- Enhances Brain Function and Memory
- Increases Energy Levels and Self-Awareness
- Boosts Cell Growth and Immunity
- Eliminates the Effects of Electrosmog Radiation and Much More!

BIO STACKING

Bio-stacking is the practice of combining multiple therapies into a single session to amplify their effects.



Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

Both oxygen and pressure are integral for fighting harmful bacteria and stimulating the release of growth factors and stem cells.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) is an advanced treatment that may produce miraculous health benefits by using higher atmospheric pressures and additional oxygen in an enclosed chamber to fuel every cell with life-giving oxygen. With regular treatments, the temporary extra-high oxygen levels help enhance normal tissue oxygen levels long after your treatment.

You'll sit in our pressurized oxygen chamber in a comfortable lounge chair. Relax, breathe deeply and absorb higher levels of oxygen.

BENEFITS

- Improves Muscle Performance and Recovery
- Accelerates Wound Healing
- Reduces Pain and Inflammation
- Increases Blood Circulation
- Encourages the Formation of New Collagen and Skin Cells
- Increases Oxygen Concentration in the Tissues and Much More!



HyperMax O2 (EWOT)

You don't have to be an Olympic level athlete to appreciate the benefits of this therapy, which improves endurance and recovery.

HyperMax O2 (EWOT) Therapy uses an oxygen generator to fill a large medical-grade bag that holds 900 liters of oxygen with a high-flow mask attached. HyperMax Oxygen allows no room air inside, so every breath you take is 93% oxygen. Only the oxygen from the bag is inhaled as a valve in the mask opens while CO2 is blown out through the CO2 port into the room as you exhale. If you want to experience the most effective body-charging workout, HyperMax O2 (EWOT) is for you.

You'll wear an oxygen mask while on a 20-minute exercise session on a stationary bike. Comfortable workout clothes are recommended.

BENEFITS

- Enhances Energy and Endurance
- Accelerates Active Recovery
- Increases Mental Clarity and Focus
- Boosts Immunity
- Improves Sleep and Overall Wellbeing
- Reduces Pain and Inflammation

WHAT IS THE SUPERHUMAN PROTOCOL?

The "Superhuman" protocol is designed to optimize performance, heal injury, retard aging, and promote the highest level of physical and mental conditioning possible.

It exposes your body to three of Earth's natural elements: Magnetism, Oxygen, and Light. In that order. It's a 35-minute protocol utilizing 3 technologies. 70% of the time you're lying down and relaxing.

Therapeutic Red Light: TheraLight 360

Stimulate and boost new cell growth to repair damaged tissue with red light therapy, which is a supercharging, anti-aging powerhouse for physical and mental health.

Red Light Therapy is an FDA-approved, state-of-the-art technology that utilizes Red and Near-infrared healing light – also known as Photobiomodulation Therapy (PBM) – from all angles directly and deeper into the cells through the skin, bypassing digestion to destroy free radicals.

You'll lie on the light bed while maximizing skin exposure to the therapeutic red light. Protective eyewear is provided, if needed.

BENEFITS

- Improves Muscle Performance and Recovery
- Supports Optimal Immune Function
- Reduces Pain and Inflammation
- Increases Blood Circulation
- Relieves Joint Pain and Stiffness
- Triggers Cell-Specific Repair Processes and Much More!





Skin & Body TREATMENTS

We offer a full menu of treatments—including scrubs, wellness applications and wraps—to promote healing, hydration and detox in the body. Our aestheticians use organic, wild-crafted and professional grade products and techniques to cleanse, exfoliate, nourish and hydrate the skin.

Medical Grade Hydra Facial

AQUAFIRME XS

A revolutionized facial machine. This painless, safe, and effective all-in-one treatment can restore balance and vitality to your skin by utilizing serums derived from plant extracts formulated to replenish the skin.

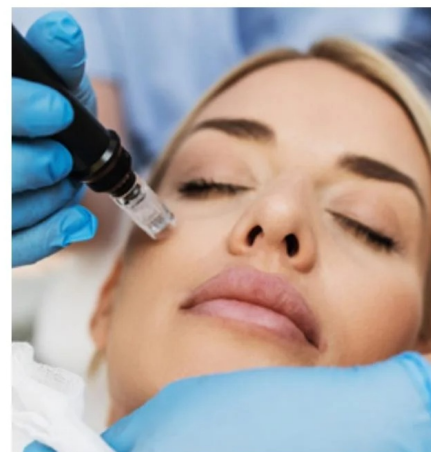
Combining advanced technologies, EVO and EXO2, AquaFirmeXS uses specially designed solutions to deeply nourish, cleanse, exfoliate, tighten, and hydrate your skin. EVO cleanses the skin by combining spiral movements and vacuum suction to remove dirt. EXO2 combines vibration and CO2 microdermabrasion to deeply exfoliate and oxygenate to help improve skin tone and texture so you can feel self-confident and radiant.

Lay back and relax as you experience this non-invasive skin therapy, which combines spiral movements, vacuum suction, vibration, and CO2 microdermabrasion.



BENEFITS

- Deep Cleansing and Hydrating
- Tightening and Rejuvenating
- Deep Exfoliation and Oxygenation
- Re-Energizes Skin Cells
- Enhances Skin Elasticity
- Addresses Sun Damage and Pigmentation



Microneedling

SCARLET SRF

A revolutionary, FDA-approved solution to help combat signs of aging and a wide variety of cosmetic concerns – from skin tightening on the face and neck to improving tone and texture. Rosacea, aging hands, and even loose skin on the body can also be treated successfully.

This short-pulse radio frequency (SRF) with microneedling skin treatment delivers radio frequency energy beneath the superficial layer of the skin through specialized microneedles to increase the density of your skin for the ultimate youthful look and feel. You'll experience optimal results with little downtime and minimal discomfort.

The body responds to Scarlet SRF by stimulating the production of collagen – the skin's main structural protein – to help repair and tighten the skin providing the ultimate treatment for forehead wrinkles, eyebrow drooping, crow's feet, cheekbone, and mouth sagging, smile lines, and skin around the jaw – usually only treatable with a surgical facelift and is suitable for all skin types.

Scarlet SRF can also be combined with the power of EXOIE plant-based stem cell technology. When microneedling is combined with the power of EXO I E, you can enhance rejuvenation and expect faster recovery time.

BENEFITS

- Improves Appearance of Fine Lines and Deep Wrinkles
- Lifts, Firms, Tightens, and Improves Skin Texture
- Unifies Skin Tone by Reducing Hyperpigmentation and Melasma
- Improves Rosacea
- Treats Sun Damaged Skin and Scars
- Treats Acne Scars and Burns

Body Treatments

Skin is the largest organ of the body and is a great vessel to deliver nourishment to the body and also to eliminate toxins. Immunity will offer a variety of healing treatments not only to benefit the overall health of the body but also reverse premature aging by exfoliating dead skin cells away, dry brushing, and feeding the skin healing applications like Castor Oil, Magnesium, and many other hydrating combinations.



CASTOR OIL BODY WRAP:

Recommend in conjunction with colon therapy.

BENEFITS

- Moisturizes
- Reduces Inflammation/Pain
- Detoxifies Liver
- Helps Relieve Constipation
- Boosts Metabolism

MAGNESIUM BODY WRAP:

Recommended for relaxation, Calmness, and deep muscle nourishment and pain relief.

BENEFITS

- Muscle and Nerve Function.
- Blood Pressure Regulation.
- Blood Sugar Control.
- Energy Production.
- Protein Synthesis.
- Bone Density.
- DNA Repair.

DRY BRUSHING

Dry brushing involves gently massaging the body with a natural bristle brush to help exfoliate the skin, stimulate the lymphatic system, and increase circulation.

Massages

One of the immediate benefits of a 50 min or 80 min massage is a feeling of deep relaxation and calm. This occurs because massage prompts the release of endorphins – the brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) that produce feelings of wellbeing.

Levels of stress hormones, such as adrenalin, cortisol and norepinephrine, are also reduced. Studies indicate that high levels of stress hormones impair the immune system.

Immunity will offer therapeutic massages for a variety of needs from Lymph Massage to Deep Tissue. Along with additions like CBD oil, Hot towels, and Trigger Point focus.

BENEFITS

- Reduced Muscle Tension
- Improved Circulation
- Stimulation of the Lymphatic System
- Reduction of Stress Hormones
- Relaxation
- Increased Joint Range of Motion
- Improved Skin Tone
- Improved Recovery of Soft Tissue Injuries
- Heightened Mental Alertness
- Reduced Anxiety and Depression.

Organic Facials

Getting a facial is not only relaxing and rejuvenating to the face, but also the mind. Facials allow you to focus on your breathing and regain your confidence in having healthy beautiful skin. Monthly facials help to support your at home skincare program to achieve the healthiest skin possible.

4 Benefits to Getting a Monthly Facial

1. INCREASE CIRCULATION

Facials help to renew skin cells by circulating the blood flow under the skin, which then can decrease puffiness and fluid build up that comes from our lymphatic system. Good circulation is important in that it brings oxygen, proteins and nutrition to the skin, while ridding our skin of toxins.

2. DEEP CLEANSING

Although, we like to think our daily skin cleaners are getting deep down into our pores, they can only do so much. Getting a facial helps remove the build up of oil and dirt that an everyday cleanser can not. Bacteria derived by the oil and dirt are also removed, leaving you with a healthy glowing skin.

3. ANTI-AGING

By increasing the circulation in your face, the cell turnover rate helps to slow down the aging process. Getting a monthly facial massage stimulates collagen production and strengthen the muscles in your face, minimizing fine lines and wrinkles and gaining softer smoother skin. (Collagen is naturally produced, but unfortunately starts to decline at about age 25)

4. RELAXATION

Getting a facial is not only relaxing to the face, but also the mind. Facials allow you to focus on your breathing and regain your confidence in having healthy beautiful skin.

Organic Skin Care products

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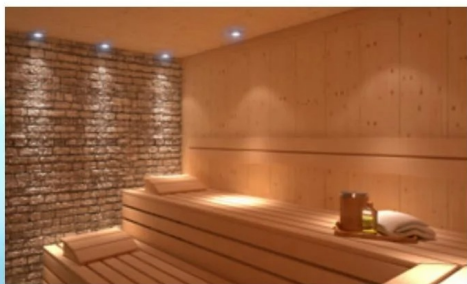




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STEP ONE

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BENEFITS

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STEP TWO

Steam Room

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BENEFITS

- Clears Sinuses and Relieves Congestion
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STEP THREE

Hot Tub

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BENEFITS

- Improves Sleep
- Calms Nervous System
- Burns Fat
- Promotes Blood Circulation



STEP FOUR

Cold Plunge

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BENEFITS

- Energizes
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- Tightens and Closes Skin Pores

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SPORTING SPOTLIGHT

Leesburg High girls make history, winning state weightlifting title with heart, strength and record-breaking lifts.

106S





PEOPLE

GREENLEA SALAZAR

Freshman balances sports and academics with Olympic dreams.

STORY: KYLE COPPOLA × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL



Greenlea Salazar is no ordinary freshman. The Mount Dora Christian Academy standout is making waves in the world of javelin, balancing a packed athletic schedule with a rigorous academic workload.

Greenlea, who took up javelin in the seventh grade, quickly discovered her natural talent in the sport, dominating local competitions. She honed her skills at Tavares Middle School under the guidance of Kevin and April Von Maxey, whom she credits for shaping her into the competitor she is today.

"I am so thankful for Kevin and April Von Maxey and would not be where I am today without them," Greenlea says. "My parents, Hank and Bridgette, my grandparents, and MDCA Athletic Director Megan Ziegelhofer have also been incredible influences in my life."

Salazar's success is not limited to javelin. She is a multisport athlete, competing in volleyball, track and field, soccer, softball and weightlifting. Despite her demanding schedule, she thrives academically at MDCA, where she receives strong support from the school's faculty.

"The school provides me with resources to help balance my academics and athletics," Greenlea says. "It's a great environment that allows me to succeed both on and off the field."

The young athlete has already competed at the

highest level for middle school athletes, finishing 15th in the nation at last year's Junior Olympics. She was the highest-finishing 14-year-old in the nation in javelin competing against older, more experienced athletes.

"I have goals to compete in the Olympics one day and throw in college," Greenlea says. "I might be a freshman, but I've already competed against 15- and 16-year-olds, and I know I can push myself to be the best."

Not only has Greenlea competed at the Junior Olympics, but she also has two middle school state championship medals under her belt, including finishing 3rd overall last year in Florida.

Her aspirations for 2025 are clear: win this month's FHSAA state championship in javelin. With her dedication and work ethic, the goal seems well within reach and Greenlea has already shown she can win as a freshman.

Beyond sports, Greenlea is no stranger to hard work. She contributes to her family's business, Hank's Clean Cuts, where she mows lawns, pulls weeds, plants flowers and helps in any way she can.

Greenlea also credits her faith as a driving force in her life.

"During every throw, every competition, or whatever I do in life, I just grow closer to the Lord every day," she says. "I know that He is with me." 🙏

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PEOPLE

THE BENTLEY TWINS

Dynamic duo lead the way at Tavares High School.

STORY: KYLE COPPOLA × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL

In the world of high school athletics, talent and hard work often go hand in hand. Few embody this combination better than Jelani and Ari Bentley, twin brothers attending Tavares High School (THS).

These young men separated by just two minutes at birth (Jelani arrived first) epitomize what it means to be student/athletes.

Academically, the Bentley twins are nothing short of exceptional. Both maintain a stellar 4.0 GPA, demonstrating a commitment to their studies that rivals their dedication to sports.

"Studies are very important to us. They always have been," Jelani says. "We both want to play college football, but we envision life beyond that, as well. We think about entrepreneurship, our future outside of sports and other things."

While football is their primary sport, the Bentleys are multi-sport athletes, also competing in wrestling, weightlifting and track & field at THS.

"We got into wrestling a few years ago and we loved it," Ari says. "Wrestling at

Tavares High is a lot of fun, and we enjoy it. It's man against man or woman against woman. It's a pure sport and among the hardest things you'll ever do. Once you have done wrestling there's literally nothing you can't do."

Their success on the mat continues to grow, as evidenced at this year's FHSAA State Championships. Both finished fifth.

The twins credit their strong work ethic to their parents, Richard and Bree Bentley.

"Our father and mother really helped us become who we are today," Jelani says. "They mean everything to us."

They also look up to their older sister, Raina Bentley, who is a senior at THS and leads the brass section of the school's Big

Red Marching Band. She will also be graduating Magna Cum Laude.

"She likes to take charge, she's a great trumpet player and is a true leader," Ari says.

Their father, Richard, grew up in a tough area of Fort Lauderdale but sought a better life for himself, prompting him to move away.



“WORKING TOGETHER WITH OUR TEAMMATES ON DEFENSE, MAKING STOPS AND GETTING TO LEVEL OPPOSING PLAYERS IS A FUN PART OF THE GAME WE ENJOY.”



He met Bree in 2003. The couple spent many years in the Orlando area but decided to move to Tavares in 2015 to benefit their children. The move has been a very positive one.

“We love Lake County and everything it provides,” Bree says. “This is a great place to raise a family.”

On the football field, both Ari and Jelani have emerged as defensive standouts for the Tavares Bulldogs. Ari is coming off a phenomenal season with 89 total tackles, including 12 tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries. Jelani contributed significantly as well, racking up 68 tackles, seven tackles for loss, a blocked punt and one fumble recovery. Combined, the twins, who have put on a ton of muscle mass since last year, ‘have racked up a notable 157 total tackles, proving they are straight up ballers.

“We are competing in weightlifting this year and that’s been really good for us as we have grown mentally and physically,”

Jelani says. That will translate well on the football field as the twins approach their junior year.

“We got into playing defense because it’s a different mindset,” Ari says. “The fun thing about playing defense is you don’t know what the opposing team is setting up, so you have to try and figure it out. Working together with our teammates on defense, making stops and getting to level opposing players is a fun part of the game we enjoy.”

Jelani also shares a philosophy that has guided him through athletic and academic challenges: “Don’t give up on yourself. It’s not all about you. Nobody can stop you but you. You just have to get up every day, appreciate what you have and try to get better at something. Even if it’s not a sport—maybe it’s math or science—learning something every day goes a long way.”

The Bentley twins have played a key role in the resurgence of

Tavares High’s football program. After finishing their freshman season with a .500 record, they helped lead the Bulldogs to their first winning record since 2021.

“We are blessed to be a part of a program like this,” Jelani says. “It meant a lot to us to be part of the turnaround especially with great teammates and sharing that success as a team. We love the guys in the locker room, our coaches and being a part of this has been special.”

With two more years left in their high school careers, the Bentley twins have their sights set on continuing their athletic and academic merit. They aspire to play college football but are also looking ahead to life beyond the game, with interests in business and entrepreneurship.

“We got a great team coming back for the 2025 season in a few months,” Ari says. “I can’t wait to get back at it and continue to build upon the success of last year.”

Know a talented student/athlete? Fill us in!
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KYLE COPPOLA

LIFTING



Leesburg High School girls weightlifting team makes history.

STORY: KYLE COPPOLA × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL

For the first time in Florida history, a team won the FHSAA Class 2A Girls Weightlifting State Championship with just three lifters medalizing. It was an extraordinary feat, and for Leesburg High School Girls Weightlifting Coach Josh Boyer, a

moment of immense pride as his team claimed their second state title in the Olympic category and third team state championship overall.

Leesburg entered the competition without the depth it had in previous years, but what they lacked in

numbers, they made up for in heart, fortitude and sheer strength. Leading the charge was senior Mileysa Lebron-Escudero, who delivered a performance for the ages. Competing in the 101-lb. class, she won gold in both the Olympic and Traditional



categories, breaking records along the way. Her 280-pound lift in the Olympic category set a new state record.

"I was incredibly proud to accomplish that," Mileysa says. "It was my final high school weightlifting competition, and it was the first time my father and grandparents could attend, as they flew in from Puerto Rico. Being originally from Puerto Rico and living here with my mother, an elementary school teacher in Leesburg, having my entire family there meant the world to me. Their presence gave me even more motivation to push myself to the limit."

Mileysa's weightlifting journey began as a way to make friends, and she leaves the sport with lifelong bonds forged in the gym.

She was not the only standout for Leesburg, as senior Nevaeh Wells dominated in the Traditional category, securing first place with a 500-lb. total. With this victory, Wells became the most decorated weightlifter in Leesburg High School history, acquiring 10 FHSAA medals throughout her career.

"Weightlifting is about lifting young women up," Nevaeh says. "It's been so rewarding to see girls come into the program who couldn't lift much when they started just like myself, but by the end, were competing for state championships. That is incredibly empowering, and I'm thankful to have been part of the journey."

Leesburg's tradition of excellence extends beyond the gym, as athletes like Kayla Nord have paved the way for future generations. With nine FHSAA medals to her name, Kayla ranks second all-time in Leesburg's storied weightlifting history.

"Weightlifting is about being kind, humble, dedicated and assertive," Kayla says. "To me, a strong woman embodies confidence and these traits. I will forever take these memories with me. Nevaeh and I became great friends because of this sport and you

WEIGHTLIFTING IS ABOUT LIFTING YOUNG WOMEN UP.

— NEVAEH WELLS



can't put a price on what it's meant to be a part of this journey."

Assistant coach Taylor Wood has watched the sport evolve over the years as athletes constantly pushed the boundaries of what is possible.

"The sport of girls' weightlifting has grown incredibly over the past few years," Coach Wood says. "The amount of weight these girls lift continues to rise every year. They're redefining the limits of women's sports, and that's a wonderful thing to witness."

The Leesburg girls weightlifting program has always been about more than just lifting weights, Coach Boyer says.

"It's about developing character, resilience and the confidence in these young women to push past perceived limits," he says. "That's what makes our girls so successful—not just their physical strength, but their mental toughness."

As the senior leaders move on, the future of Leesburg's program will rest on the shoulders of Hannah Stubbs, the only returning lifter from this year's historic team. For Hannah, the experience has been life changing.

"Weightlifting is amazing," Hannah says. "It's incredible how far my teammates and I have come. From the beginning of the year to now, it's been a transformative process. I am so thankful to learn from such strong

women, along with a great coaching staff, who have helped me both mentally and physically."

Leesburg's state championship was not just huge for girls' weightlifting—it was a major victory for the team, as they achieved two things which had never been accomplished in Florida before. These young ladies have inspired future generations of female weightlifters to rise to the challenge and push past their own limits.

"This championship is about more than just winning medals, it's about breaking barriers and proving what's possible," Coach Boyer says. "These

girls have shown that with hard work, commitment and an unshakable belief in themselves, they can accomplish anything. It's an honor to coach such an incredible group of athletes."

The significance of Leesburg's win extends far beyond the school walls. As girls' and boys' weightlifting continues to gain recognition in Florida and nationwide, performances like these serve as a catalyst for growth in women's sports and more schools are beginning to invest in their weightlifting programs. 

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RECIPE

APPLES *to* ZUCCHINI

The Alphabet Chef makes healthy eating fun for kids.

STORY: CINDY PETERSON X PHOTOS: CINDY PETERSON AND PROVIDED



etting kids to eat healthy can feel like an endless battle where broccoli is the enemy and sugar reigns supreme. Parents everywhere know the struggle: one day your child

devours a plate of carrots, and the next, they stick their noses up at anything green. Grocery stores don't make it any easier, strategically placing sugary cereals at kid-eye level, while fast food ads promise toys with every meal. Between busy schedules, picky eaters and the lure of processed snacks, convincing kids to choose a banana over a candy bar can seem like an impossible task.

But what if eating healthy wasn't a fight? What if it was fun? That's exactly the mission of The Alphabet Chef, **Laura St. John**, who has turned the challenge of healthy eating into a playful, exciting experience for kids everywhere.

Laura has spent a lifetime in the spotlight. From belting out Broadway tunes to performing sultry love ballads, her career as a singer, dancer, and entertainer has taken her to cruise ships, corporate events, and some of the most unique performance settings imaginable. But despite her vibrant career on stage, one of her favorite roles has been as The Alphabet Chef, where she combines her love for entertainment with a mission to make healthy eating fun and engaging for kids.

BIRTH OF THE ALPHABET CHEF

Laura's entertainment career began early. She studied dance at the Royal Academy of Dance, later moving into professional entertainment. Over the years, she performed everything from rock and pop to duets with operatic tenors.

But despite her passion for music, life as a performer was demanding, and as a mother, she began looking for a way to stay creative while focusing on her family.

"THE ALPHABET CHEF LIKES TO MAKE HEALTHY FOOD FUN," SHE SAYS. "HER CRAZY OUTFIT, HER HAIR, HER VOICE. WHEN SHE WALKS INTO A ROOM, THE KIDS LIGHT UP WITH EXCITEMENT."

Laura's journey into teaching children about food started at home.

"When my kids were little, I was trying to figure out a way to get them to eat healthy foods," she says. "I used to talk in a strange, high-pitched voice while I made their meals. They loved it and ate everything I gave them because it was a fun experience. When

they had sleepovers, the kids would ask me to 'be the chef, be the chef.'"

That simple game evolved into a full-fledged program.

"I realized that I could have that effect on all children, not just my own," Laura says. "It would be another creative thing that I could do during the day while my kids were at school—plus get out the message of healthy eating to young children."

In 1996, Laura first started dressing up as The Alphabet Chef, officially trademarking the name in 2010. Since then, she has traveled to schools, libraries, grocery stores and even birthday parties, teaching children how to love healthy foods in a way that feels like playtime.



In addition to her work as The Alphabet Chef, Laura St. John has brought her passion for education and creativity to the world of children's literature. She has written two children's books alongside her Alphabet Chef coloring book, using her signature blend of fun and learning to engage young readers. One of her books tackles an issue close to her heart—bullying, drawing from her own childhood experiences to help kids understand kindness and resilience.





"The Alphabet Chef likes to make healthy food fun," she says. "Her crazy outfit, her hair, her voice. When she walks into a room, the kids light up with excitement."

Her signature program, Letters of the Week, introduces kids to foods based on different letters of the alphabet.

"I go by the alphabet," she says. "So if we're doing A, I'll bring in asparagus and apples. If we're doing C, we'll look at carrots, cauliflower and celery. I let kids try things, and if they don't like it, that's okay, but at least they gave it a shot."

Beyond introducing foods, Laura teaches kids about food marketing tricks used in grocery stores.

"When I go into classrooms, I tell kids to look at where sugary cereals are placed in stores—right at their eye level," she says. "Companies are tricking them into wanting the bad stuff first. Once kids realize that, they start paying more attention to their food choices."



Music remains a huge part of her life, and today, she shares that passion with her daughter. The two perform together as a mother-daughter duo "Laura & Sunny," singing everything from harmonic pop tunes to the national anthem at major events.

Sunny performs all around Central Florida, too, and has followed in her mom's footsteps when it comes to entertainment. She also is the Alphabet Chef assistant at times.

She also gets kids involved by making food interactive.

"I have competitions where kids bring in their healthiest lunch," she says. "Teachers tell me that students are more motivated to pack healthy lunches because they want to win."

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Laura hopes to partner with large grocery store chains to bring The Alphabet Chef to more families. She also plans to explore digital content and online programming.

"The more we buy organic and healthy things, the cheaper the food will get," she says. "It's supply and demand. If we make healthier choices more common, companies will follow."

She's also focusing on teenagers through her Homeless Goodie Bag project, using volunteer work to start discussions on sugar intake, protein needs and processed foods.



"I don't tell kids they can't have something," she says. "It's about balance. If you want a cookie, fine—but not every day. If you love French fries, let's look at healthier ways to make them."

For Laura, it all comes down to exposure.

"Kids just aren't exposed to enough variety," she says. "I bring in a pineapple and they say, 'That's SpongeBob's house! Then I ask if they've ever tasted it, and suddenly they're excited to try it.'"

Her message is simple: healthy eating doesn't have to be boring.

"I don't believe in forcing kids to eat certain things," she says. "You have to make it fun, give them options and let them feel like they're making a decision."

Through laughter and creativity, The Alphabet Chef is helping kids form lifelong healthy habits—one letter and one bite at a time.

To learn more, visit www.laurastjohn.com.

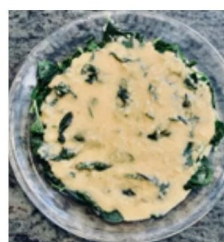
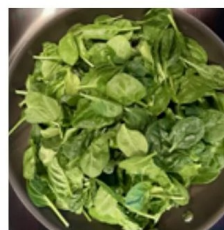
KID PROOF SPINACH

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 bag fresh spinach
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
- 2 Tbsp. melted real butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated parmesan
- 2 Tbsp. flour
- 2 eggs

DIRECTIONS:

Steam spinach over stove in pan with water for 3 minutes. Mix together melted real butter, grated parmesan, flour and eggs. After spinach is steamed, drain the water out. Try to get as much of the water out of the spinach. Spray an oven dish with non-stick cooking spray. Put steamed spinach into the dish and spread it out. Add the egg mixture on top and spread evenly. Bake at 325 degrees for 15 minutes. Kids will eat it up!





KID'S SMOOTHIE

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups water
- 2 cups fresh spinach, packed
- 2 cups peaches, frozen
- 1 cup pineapple, frozen
- 2 bananas, peeled
- 1 Tbsp. sugar, Truvia, Stevia, Monk Fruit or honey

DIRECTIONS:

Put all ingredients in a high-speed blender and blend for 2 minutes or until all chunks are gone. Serve immediately.



CUCUMBER & CARROT "FLOWERS"

1. Wash 2-3 carrot sticks and 2 cucumbers. Try to get fat medium size cucumbers and larger size carrots and ones that are straight.
2. Using a potato peeler, sharp knife or circular kitchen carving tool, remove the "inside" of a cucumber (where the seeds are) to make a hollow tube of cucumber 'shell'—parents may need to help with this step.
3. Once you have a hollow tube of cucumber and you can look thru it to the other side, "shove" the carrot stick into the cucumber shell until the whole cucumber is filled with carrot. Make sure it is tight as possible. The tip of the carrot should be sticking out of the cucumber a bit until it is "tight" inside.
4. If you want to, you can take a rind tool and carve the green part of the cucumber skin to make it look prettier but it's not necessary.
5. You can cut off the carrot sticking out of the cucumber and eat it or save it for a salad. Or you can use it for a handle while you make slices of the cucumber. The carrot will be exposed in the center of the cucumber!
6. Keep cutting them to the thickness you want then lay flat on a plate to show the pretty flower.
7. You can even use a celery stick to represent the 'stem.'
8. Eat alone or dip into a yogurt veggie dip or ranch dressing.



Hey, readers! Do you have favorite recipes or know a chef we should profile?

→ Comment on this article or send story ideas to cindy@akersmediagroup.com.



CINDY PETERSON



REVIEW

Toast of the Town

The Toast Café brings the taste of Indiana to Fruitland Park.

STORY: GINA HORAN × PHOTOS: NICOLE HAMEL

Chris and Leandra Gentry opened The Toast Café last June, bringing their beloved Anderson, Indiana, diner concept to Fruitland Park. These seasoned restaurateurs spent years slinging hash in the Hoosier State before deciding to trade in cold winters for Florida sunshine. “We loved Indiana, but as we started visiting Florida more and

more, we realized moving here just made sense,” says Leandra.

Their simple mission is to serve great food and create a welcoming space, a reflection of their Midwest roots. So far, it’s a hit.

“We are so blessed to have met so many wonderful people,” Leandra says. “From locals to fellow Indiana transplants who recognize the Midwest flavors, plenty have wandered in by chance and are now regulars.”

Karen Young, a server who’s been with them since day one, says the customers make the place special.

“People love the food, and they’re just polite, happy-go-lucky folks,” she says. “I came from a breakfast background, so this feels like home to me.”

The sign outside proudly declares them the Home of the Breakfast Manhattan, and a quick internet search might leave you with confusing classic cocktail recipes. Here on US Hwy. 441, however, it’s a variety of dishes with one thing in common: gravy.

The most popular style is with scrambled eggs, shredded potatoes,



“WE MAKE A LOT OF STUFF HOMEMADE,” LEANDRA SAYS. “FOR EXAMPLE, I MADE THE MEATLOAF TODAY.”

cheese and sausage, all piled onto a biscuit, which is enormous, golden and fluffy.

Some recipes are a community effort.

“Many of the dishes were created by people we know,” Leandra shares. “My father-in-law actually came up with the supreme omelet, and one of Chris’s friends created a Manhattan.”

The popular “Chicken Charlie” was named after a guy who lived across the street from their old restaurant back in Anderson.

Walking into The Toast Café feels like stepping into a sunrise. The bright lemon-colored walls, yellow gingham tablecloths and the smell of fresh coffee set the tone before you even sit down.

When our chief photographer Nicole and I visited, Chris was manning the griddle while Leandra folded napkins and answered phones. She cooks, too.

The menu is full of Midwest favorites, like the breaded tenderloin, a pounded-out pork filet smothered in mashed potatoes and gravy.



Chris and Leandra Gentry

IF YOU GO

THE TOAST CAFÉ

2468 US Hwy. 441, Fruitland Park

352.901.6897

Hours: 7am-2pm, Tue-Sun.

Closed Mondays



“This is a best seller,” Chris says. “It’s a huge hit, especially at lunch, but some folks can’t resist ordering it first thing in the morning.”

Another favorite is the Big Classic breakfast, often shared by couples, which has all the favorites—eggs any style, sausage, bacon, hash browns, biscuits and gravy and your choice of toast. For lunch, crispy haddock is popular, as is the burger, a patty made with a three-meat blend and stacked with two cheeses and grilled sweet peppers on Texas toast.

“We make a lot of stuff homemade,” Leandra says. “For example, I made the meatloaf today.”

I tried her traditional meatloaf, which was moist with onions, seasonings and a crispy ketchup-topped crust with a hint of nostalgia. It reminded me of my childhood dinners.

Their specials change daily, so check the board upon entry. Some favorites include homemade corned beef hash, chicken poblano, pepper soup or cheeseburger soup. There are also big cinnamon rolls, fruit cobblers and cakes.

Early birds get a deal 7-9am, and men’s clubs, solo regulars and couples have made it a daily stop. Sundays bring in a flood of churchgoers or friends who need a hangover breakfast after a night of revelry.



“We go through a lot of coffee too, and I’m still trying to figure out how much to order, but at this point, it’s two cases at a time,” Leandra says.

I am a gravy fanatic, so I ordered the Breakfast Manhattan, which was cooked on a flat iron with a glorious amount of butter. Every bite was rich, savory and comforting. The corned beef hash was also perfection.

Leandra sent me home with an extra cobbler for my mom, who was delighted that it was packed with luscious blueberries and flaky pie crust.

Beyond the food, The Toast Café has a way of making people feel at home.

“One guy happened to be driving by, saw the sign, and thought it might be the same ‘Toast’ from Indiana,” Leandra says.

He is now a confirmed regular.

It’s that mix of family, community and good food that makes this transplanted café with Hoosier hospitality a new Fruitland Park favorite. ☺

Let’s do lunch or dinner!

→ Tell us about a great restaurant by emailing gina@akersmediagroup.com.



GINA HORAN

local DINE eats

From classic diners and lakeside restaurants to fine dining and everything in between, Lake and Sumter counties' culinary scene is booming. Your favorite meal is sure to be served with a side of hospitality.

You can find a copy of Lake & Sumter Style at all listed dining locations!

BUSHNELL

Beef 'O' Brady's
2586 W. CR 48
352.568.7000

Darrell's Diner
2237 W. CR 48
352.444.2318

CLERMONT

Akina Sushi Bar & Asian Fusion Bistro
4300 S. US Hwy. 27, Ste. 101
352.243.8988

Cheeser's Palace Café
707 W. Montrose St.
352.404.9431

Crooked Spoon Gastropub
200 Citrus Tower Blvd.
352.404.7808

Gator's Dockside
1200 Oakley Seaver Dr.
352.242.1825

Lakeridge Winery & Vineyards
19239 US Hwy. 27
352.394.8627

Lily's on the Lake
846 W. Osceola St.
352.562.7840

Oak Wood Smokehouse & Grill
230 Citrus Tower Blvd.
352.394.0036

Sarah's Greek Cuisine & More
16640 Cagan Crossings Blvd., Ste. 305
352.404.8031

EUSTIS

Gators Dockside
15241 US Hwy. 441
352.357.1255

Oak Wood Smokehouse & Grill
2911 David Walker Dr.
352.483.0137

Stavro's & Sons of Eustis
2100 W. CR 44
352.589.9100

Taki's Pizza House
1600 S. Bay St.
352.357.0022

THAT Place
925 N. Bay St. #7
352.308.8676

The Troff
936 N. Bay St.
352.357.9939

Tony's Pizza & Subs
2760 E. Orange Ave.
352.589.9001

FRUITLAND PARK

Mystic Ice Cream
1217 W. Miller St.
352.812.1366

Stavro's & Sons
3223 US Hwy. 441
352.315.0028

The Rose Plantation
200 Rose Ave.
352.805.4340

GROVELAND

Red Wing Restaurant
12500 S. SR 33
352.429.2997

Barrels & Boards
7965 SR 50 A500
352.557.5007

Chefing It UP Pizza Cafe
115 S. Lake Ave.
352.557.8092

HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS

JB Boondocks Bar & Grill
704 S. Lakeshore Blvd.
352.324.3600

Mission Inn's La Hacienda Restaurant
10400 CR 48
352.324.3910

Mission Inn's Nicker's Clubhouse Restaurant
10400 CR 48
352.324.2718

LADY LAKE

Bamboo Bistro
700 US Hwy. 441
352.605.9554

Blu Spoon Frozen Yogurt
704 US Hwy. 441
352.775.4078

El Ranchito Mexican Restaurant
1 Lagrande Blvd.
352.750.3335

Harbor Hills Country Club
6538 Lake Griffin Rd.
352.753.7000

Latin Flavors Bar & Grill
13769 US Hwy. 441
352.561.4002

Marco's Pizza
13721 US Hwy. 441
352.775.1500

Oak Wood Smokehouse & Grill
860 US Hwy. 441
352.751.5640

Takis Greek and Italian Restaurant
13761 N. US Hwy. 441
352.430.3630

LEESBURG

Brooklyn's Pizzeria Bar & Grill
27405 US Hwy. 27
352.728.2020

Cousin Vinnie's Family Sports Restaurant
10700 US Hwy. 441, Ste. 101
352.253.2442

Donut King
708 S. 14th St.
352.805.4888

El Ranchito Mexican Cuban Restaurant
911 W. North Blvd.
352.460.0123

Ellen's Café
712 W. Main St., Ste. 5
352.460.5047

Fire House Subs
709 N. 14th St.
352.323.3473

HP Grill
1403 S. 14th St.
352.314.0006

Ichiban Chinese & Japanese Buffet
10301 US Hwy. 441
352.728.6669

Kawachi Sushi & Bar
10601 US Hwy. 441, Ste. C12
352.431.3449

La Palma Mexican Grill
1690 Citrus Blvd.
352.323.1444

Luna Azul Authentic Mexican
1341 S. 14th St.
352.805.4174

McCracken's Irish Pub
719 W. Main St.
352.460.0659

Marmadukes Brewery & Eatery
215 W. Main St.
352.460.0421

Oak Wood Smokehouse & Grill
27745 US Hwy. 27
352.435.4633

Old Time Diner
1350 W. North Blvd.
352.805.4250

Prime 3 on Main
610 W. Main St.
352.314.0015

Rodello's Italian Restaurant
26736 US Hwy. 27
352.319.8093

Ski Beach Bar & Grill
21 Dozier Cir.
352.973.0793

The Brick & Barrel Public House
209 W. Main St.
352.431.3069

The Coffee Snob
1101 W. North Blvd., Ste. 1
352.460.4570

The Sipping Garden and Bistro
605 W. Magnolia St.
352.460.0716

Wolfy's
918 N. 14th St.
352.787.6777

MOUNT DORA

Barnwood Country Kitchen & BBQ
3725 W. Old US Hwy. 441
352.630.4903

Country Club of Mount Dora
1900 Country Club Blvd.
352.735.4059

Fiesta Grande Mexican Grill
421 N. Baker St.
352.385.3540



Step back in time to enjoy the legacy and elegance of Howey-in-the-Hills' pride and joy.

The historic Mission Resort & Club offers a wide variety of year-round dining. La Margarita/Conquistador provides an elegant yet casual experience with a cozy bar, second-floor patio, fire pit and live music. The menu includes artisanal pizzas, prime cuts and fresh seafood. (Hours: Mon.-Thu. 11am-10pm, Fri./Sat. 11am-11pm, Sun. 4-10pm.) Chef's Week @ La Margarita features a five-course tasting menu by Executive Chef Krystle Seamon for \$70 per person. La Hacienda is a golfer's favorite, with stunning views, made-to-order omelets, pancakes, waffles and more. Its Sunday Champagne Brunch, voted "Best Brunch in Central Florida," includes bottomless champagne, fresh seafood and carving stations. Reservations: 352.324.3910. (Hours: Daily 6-11am, Grand Buffet Sundays 11am-3pm) Nicker's, near the Pro Shop, offers gourmet burgers, fresh salads and golf course views. The Saturday Night Prime Rib and Seafood Fest features crab legs and prime rib. Reservations: 352.324.2718. (Hours: Sun.-Thu. 11am-6pm, Fri. 11am-8pm, Sat. 11am-9pm).

→ **Mission Resort & Club** / 10400 CR 48, Howey-in-the-Hills / 352.324.3101 / missionresortandclub.com

Magical Meat Boutique

322 N. Alexander St.
352.729.6911

Mount Dora Pizza & Subs

2718 W. Old US Hwy. 441
352.383.5303

Pisces Rising

239 W. 4th Ave.
352.385.2669

OXFORD

Candelaria Eatery & Café

4059 Thomas St., Unit A01
352.399.2329

Gio's Deli

3975 CR 201
352.748.5558

Pho Saigon

11717 US Hwy. 301
352.492.9423

TAVARES

Bella Nonna Pizzeria & More

280 Silverado St.
352.508.9370

BTW (Burgers, Tacos & Waffles)

115 E. Main St.
352.508.9287

Fish Camp Lake Eustis

901 Lake Shore Blvd.
352.742.4400

Hurricane Dockside Grill

3351 W. Burleigh Blvd.
352.508.5137

Puddle Jumpers Lakeside Grill & Bar

111 W. Ruby St.
352.508.5862

THE VILLAGES

Cody's Roadhouse Brownwood

3731 Meggison Rd.
352.430.2996

Cody's Original Roadhouse

1041 Lake Shore Dr.
352.259.8500

Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream

1001 Lake Shore Dr.
352.751.0261

Lopez Legacy Golf & Country Club

17145 Buena Vista Blvd.
352.753.1450

NYPD Pizzeria

4046 Wedgewood Ln.
352.750.1994

Peachwave

249 Colony Blvd.
352.750.2238

Peterbrooke Chocolatier

1087 Canal St.
352.415.8700

Roberto's Ristorante Pizzeria

2468 Burnsed Blvd.
352.626.1059

Sakura Japanese Restaurant

265 Colony Blvd.
352.205.7393

TooJay's Deli

1129 Canal St.
352.430.0410

TooJay's Deli

2835 Brownwood Blvd.
352.350.2122

VKI Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Bar

1004 Old Mill Run
352.259.9887

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The Mason Jar

37534 SR 19
352.589.2535

WILDWOOD

Marco's Pizza

5806 Seven Mile Dr., St. 101
352.571.2400

Oakwood Express

1210 N. Main St.
352.461.0528



Brooklyn's Pizzeria & Italian Restaurant

27405 US HWY 27, LEESBURG | 352.728.2020
MYBROOKLYNPIZZERIA.COM

James & Shawna Pancari set out to create an authentic pizzeria reminiscent of those James grew up with in Brooklyn, New York. Together, they've built a loyal following of "pizza snobs" who keep coming back for more! From the moment you walk in, you're immersed in a friendly, inviting atmosphere, with the irresistible aroma of fresh Italian flavors setting the stage for an unforgettable dining experience.

Their commitment to quality is evident in every bite, from hand-tossed, scratch-made dough to freshly sliced veggies and house-made sauces. Each dish is crafted with care and served with pride. Beyond their signature New York-style pizza, the menu boasts a delicious variety of Italian specialties, such as calzones, strombolis, Italian entrées, and appetizers, plus signature sandwiches, salads, wings, and desserts. A well-curated beer and wine selection complements every meal, and gluten-free options ensure there's something for everyone. Stop by for a true taste of Italy—you won't be disappointed!

Tue, Wed, Thur
11:00am - 8:00pm

Friday
11:00am - 9:00pm

Saturday
12:00pm - 9:00pm

Sunday
12:00pm - 8:00pm

Closed Mondays

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Guru Indian Restaurant

CLERMONT HILLSIDE TERRACE, 2400 S. U.S. 27, SUITE 101, CLERMONT
352.241.9884 | GURURESTAURANTCLERMONT.COM

Owned by Chef Uday Kadam, Guru has a following of fans who savor the delicious, award-winning Indian cuisine inside the restaurant's beautiful dining room filled with Indian décor and tables with linen tablecloths. Guru earned the prestigious Best Entrée award at the 2021 Taste of South Lake & Business Expo for its Chicken Tikka Masala, featuring boneless chicken pieces cooked in a Tandoor oven with tomato sauce, onion, aromatic herbs, spices, and served with Basmati rice. Guru also has tasty appetizers, Naan breads, vegan dishes, and a wide array of entrees, including Palak Paneer, a dish of homemade cubes of cheese cooked with spinach and fresh spices; Lamb Vindaloo of choice lamb cubes marinated in vinegar with potato and a blend of spices; and Tandoori Chicken Tikka, where the chicken is marinated in mild spices and yogurt. Additionally, Indian alcoholic beverages of Taj Mahal and Kingfisher are served at Guru, and the restaurant caters private functions, parties, and provides many delivery options for orders made online at mygurutogo.com.

Mon - Sat
11:30am - 10:00pm

Sunday
11:30am - 7:00pm



La Palma Mexican Grill

1690 CITRUS BLVD., LEESBURG | 352.323.1444 | LAPALMAGRILL.COM

The entire staff invites you to a delicious dining experience at La Palma Mexican Grill. The recipes used for the restaurant's unique dishes are a blend of old-school traditions from Mexico, combined with culinary inspirations from California and Louisiana. Homemade Mexican entrees such as Tacos Azteca, carnitas, fajitas, Chori Pollo, tamales and more, are flavorful and prepared with only the freshest of ingredients. Sit comfortably in the beautiful dining room, the festive bar, or outside on the patio deck with a serene view of the grounds and of the fun wild animals that can be spotted in the trees. Enjoy fast and friendly service, reasonable prices, three-for-one margaritas all day, every day, and a party room, available by reservation, for large parties or meetings. Full menu at lapalmagrill.com. Call for daily specials.

Open Daily
11:00am - 9:00pm

Lunch Specials
11:00am - 3:00pm

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every Monday.

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Prime 3 on Main Steakhouse

**HISTORIC DOWNTOWN LEESBURG, 610 W MAIN ST, LEESBURG
352.314.0015 | PRIME3ONMAIN.COM | FACEBOOK: @PRIME3ONMAIN**

The dream and concept of three lifelong physicians, Prime 3 on Main is a confluence of American, Asian, and Latin influences in one world-class restaurant. Prime meats, prime rib, skirt steak, and seafood are our specialties. Our filet with black cherry port wine reduction sauce, or the Grouper Fromage, is unique and found nowhere else. Our Casa de Rosado Churrasco is a personal family recipe. Homemade Creme Brûlée and ice cream will complement your meal. Recently given the Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator Magazine as among the world's top wine and food restaurants, Prime 3 on Main has an extensive wine list and caters to small and large groups.



Ask us about our
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Lunch Mon - Fri
11:00am - 3:00pm
**No Reservations
Needed**

Dinner Mon - Fri
4:00pm - 9:00pm
Saturday
2:00pm - 9:00pm
**Reservations
Strongly
Encouraged**

Closed Sundays

Thursday is Ladies
Night with **\$7.00
drink specials!**



Rodello's Italian Restaurant

26736 U.S. HIGHWAY 27, LEESBURG | 352.319.8093 | RODELLOS.COM

Chef Amadeo Avila invites you to enjoy authentic and fresh Italian cuisine in a friendly, comfortable dining environment at Rodello's Italian Restaurant. The recipes used for his dishes are a blend of old-school traditions from Italy—the restaurant is named for a city in the old country—with new culinary inspirations that Chef Amadeo has learned during many years in the restaurant business. Flavorful, homemade Italian entrees such as Pistachio Crusted Lamb, Salmon Saltimbocca, Lobster Ravioli, Shrimp Risotto, and many others are classics and prepared with only the freshest ingredients. The lunch menu features personal pizzas, calzones, subs, and pasta. Sit in the spacious dining room or enjoy drinks or desserts like delicious gelato in the cozy lounge, which features a full bar, wine menu, and an array of specialty cocktails. Always look for new features on Chef Amadeo's menu, available on the restaurant's website, Rodellos.com.

Open Daily
11:00am - 9:00pm



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Mon - Sun
8:00am - 8:00pm

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And, We Deliver!**

TOOJAYS.COM





BEHIND THE BAR

PEOPLE

A KIWI GROWING IN THE VINEYARD

Winemaker Andrew Meggitt brings a unique perspective to Lakeridge Winery.

STORY: GINA HORAN × PHOTO: NICOLE HAMEL



When winemaker Andrew Meggitt was growing up in New Zealand, he didn't picture himself making wine or ending up in Florida. Yet here he is, managing winemaking operations at Lakeridge Winery in Clermont.



THE MUSCADINE: FLORIDA'S POWER-PACKED NATIVE GRAPE

Muscadine grapes may not be well-known internationally, but they thrive in Florida's heat and humidity. Their naturally thick skins protect them from pests and disease, making them one of the state's most resilient and sustainable crops. They are also rich in antioxidants.

For recipes like "Southern red BBQ sauce" or "blushing martini" featuring Lakeridge wine, pick up a recipe card at the tasting room or go to www.lakeridgewinery.com

"I went from the land of the long white cloud to the land of the long white beach," he jokes.

Andrew took the helm at Lakeridge when legendary winemaker Jeanne Burgess retired last year after 41 years of making award-winning wines with her creative and influential use of the Muscadine grape.

"Jeanne's are some big shoes to fill," he admits. "She built a true farm-to-table operation because we grow the grapes, make the wine, bottle it and sell it, which makes it a very special place."

Lakeridge Winery, founded in 1988 by the Cox family, has become an institution, setting the standard for the state's emerging wine scene in which 24 of 40 wineries statewide are Certified Florida Farm producers.

Now an integral part of the Lakeridge team, Andrew brings a global perspective and 30 years of experience working in regions like Alsace, Burgundy, and more recently, Missouri's Ozarks.

He began his new role by fine-tuning operations and he hopes to ease into anything new creatively when it comes to winemaking. He also relies on his

down-to-earth Kiwi sensibilities and checks his ego at the door.

"Wine doesn't have to be pretentious to be exceptional," he says. "It should always be accessible and a part of every celebration."

Beyond the vineyard, he's settling into life in Howey-in-the-Hills, where he and his family live. While he sometimes feels nostalgic for New Zealand, he's found a true sense of home here.

"Where I live is a little slice of Mayberry," he says. "It's a great town with people who care, residents who are involved and a strong community spirit." @

IF
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LAKERIDGE WINERY & VINEYARDS

19239 US Hwy. 27, Clermont

352.394.8627

www.lakeridgewinery.com

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Sun. 11am-5pm

Weekends: Live music & events

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GINA HORAN

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WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET

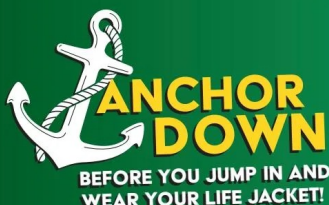


THEY ONLY WORK IF YOU WEAR THEM!

MANY DROWNINGS in Lake County happen when someone is out in the middle of the lake on a hot summer day and decides to jump in the water to cool off. The boat can easily float away; even if there is someone on board, they may not be able to get back to you if they are an inexperienced boater.

Make sure to have all your other **SAFETY EQUIPMENT** with you on the water:

- A life jacket in the appropriate size for each person aboard.
- Sound producing device • Fire Extinguisher • Vessel lights



LAKE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
PEYTON C. GRINNELL, SHERIFF

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*Cancer Facts and Figures 2024. American Cancer Society.

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what we cover

COMMUNITY LEADERS:

From elected officials to grassroots organizers, we bring you face-to-face with the leaders shaping the future of Lake and Sumter Counties.

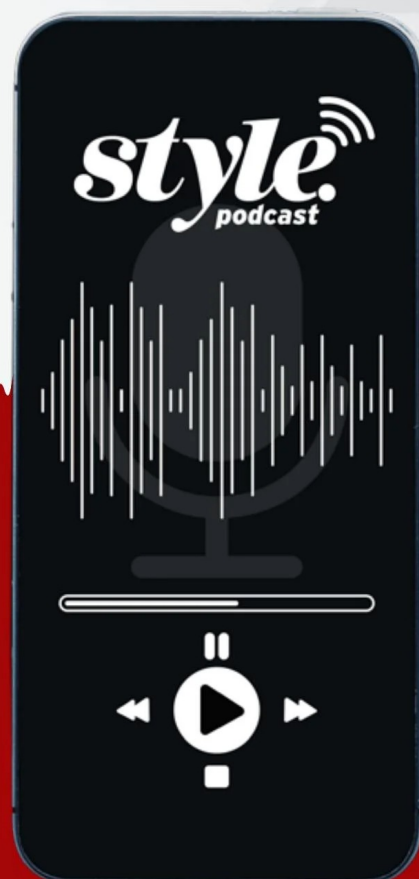
PERSONS OF INTEREST:

Hear from the individuals whose stories are as fascinating as they are impactful. Learn about their journeys, challenges, and triumphs.

LOCAL LANDSCAPE:

Stay updated on upcoming developments, community initiatives, and the latest news affecting our region.

With 20 years of experience covering the best of Lake and Sumter Counties, **Style** magazine brings its trusted voice and community focus to the world of podcasts.



Healthy living CENTRAL FLORIDA



HOSTED BY

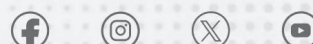
Gina Horan

Gina is a seasoned media professional who brings a wealth of experience and a dynamic perspective to The Healthy Living Podcast and the Style team. Passionate about connecting with local experts and sharing their insights, she engages Central Florida audiences with an educated and holistic approach to body, mind, spirit, and finance.



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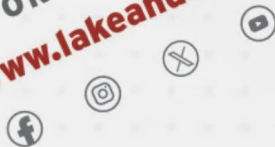
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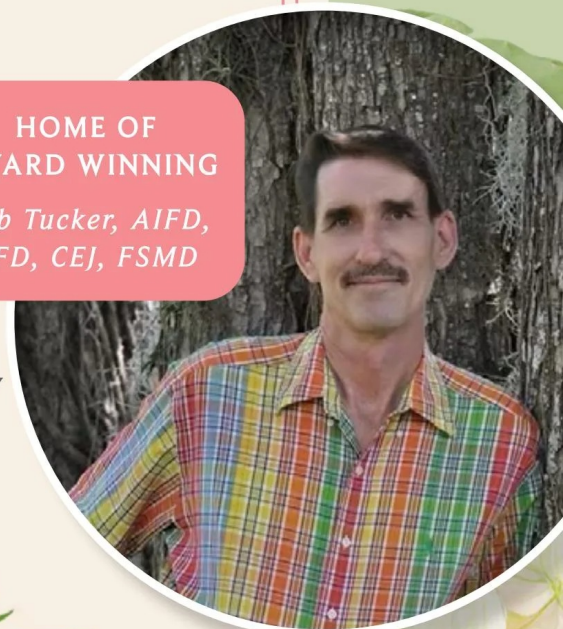
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3 | 2 | 2

CONTACT ME TODAY!

352.638.7134



Kendra Akers

REALTOR®, MORRIS REALTY & INVESTMENTS

10135 U.S. Hwy. 441, Suite 3, Leesburg
KendraAkersRealtor.com



Congratulations,



EAST RIDGE



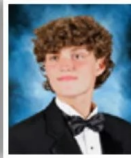
CAITLYN
BAXTER



BENJAMIN
BROSS



DESIREE
CHAVEZ



SETH
EDWARDS



BRIAN
GAVINA-REDULA



RYLEY
HOWELL



LUKE
HUNTER



RAYNA
JONES



NATHAN
KOU



JOAQUIN
MARTINEZ-LOPEZ



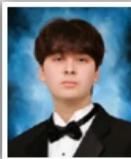
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MORALES



RYAN
OIKLE



COLE
PITTMAN



KAITO
POWELL



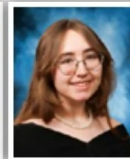
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RICH



BENJAMIN
RIEMER



ANTHONY
SCHMELZLE



ZARINA
SMITH



GWYNETH
WILLIAMS



JENNY
ZHAO



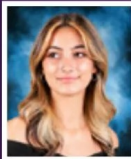
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JOSEPH
ARANA



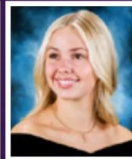
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BACHMANN



ARALYN
FERNANDEZ



ALEXANDER
KRAJEWSKI



ELLA
LARSON



BRIANNA
MALDONADO



ZOEY
MANN



ABIGAIL
MAYUSKI



JOSEPH
MCAULEY



LEAH
MCCOY

ADRIAN
MOLINA



KAYLA
MOON



VISHAL
NARINE



ANTHONY
TEODORU



RILEY
THOMASEGGI



REES
WELDON



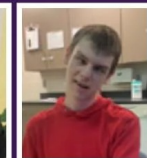
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WOOD



LAKE HILLS



KODY
HOLLAND



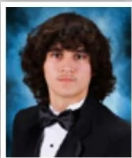
CAMDEN
MCCANDLESS



SOUTH LAKE



ISABEL
ACENSIO



SAMUEL
AUBUCHON



ANGELA
BAUTISTA CARDENAS



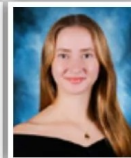
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CARBONI



JADIEL
DEJESUS-CRISTOBAL



KEVIN
DIAZ



KENZIE
HARRIS



KAYLEIGH
JACKSON



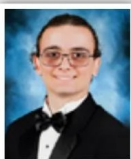
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POOTOOLAL



BELLA
REYES



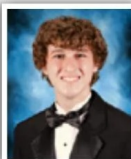
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SCHENCK



LEWIS
SCOTT



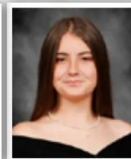
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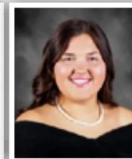
CAMRYN
ADKINS



CHRISTIAN
HEATON



ALYSSA
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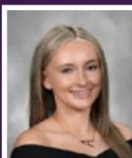
JACOB
SABELLI



MOUNT DORA



MACKENZIE
DAVIS



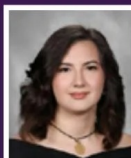
ALYSSA
DENMARK



MINA
FOURARI



KATE
KNIGHT



JULIA
LOWRY



ELLA
MAKINSON



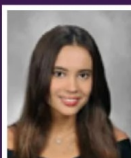
MORGAN
RACZKOWSKI



RILEY
RACZKOWSKI



JOENN
REPOLLO



PAYTON
WISE



EUSTIS



EMMA
BILLINGHAM



CAROL
CASH



CARMEN
ELLISON



JAD
JABBOUR



ABIGAIL
JACKSON



RYKER
OWENS



RILEY
REYNOLDS



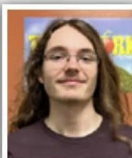
KELLI
UNG



LEESBURG



BARATH
BALAJI



TYLER
BRANAS



WALKER
CLARK



ASPEN
HESS



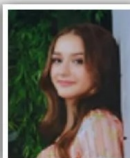
NATHANIEL
HINES



OWEN
MACLEOD



ANA SOFIA
MONTEALEGRE SANCHEZ



KAYLYNN
RENNER



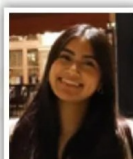
ANDREA
REYES



ROGER
RODEN



VIRTUAL



ANGELA
SERNA



ELIZABETH
UNDERWOOD



MCKENZIE
MILLER



BLAKE
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We wish you great success
in your future endeavors!

– Education Foundation of Lake County Team

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FINAL THOUGHT

TRAVEL

RV THERE YET?

7,634 miles, one behemoth and a lifetime of lessons.

STORY AND PHOTOS: CINDY PETERSON



Some trips are about the destination, but this one was about something bigger. My husband, Ryan, wanted to do this for his dad—one big adventure before time and his declining health made it impossible. His father had spent years watching others travel the country on YouTube, dreaming of the places he'd never seen. So, while we still had the chance, we packed up the in-laws and our son in an RV and hit the road.

What we didn't expect was just how rough the journey would be.

The Behemoth, as we affectionately called our 30-foot RV, was 8,000 pounds of stress on wheels. I was immediately banned from the driver's seat. Ryan, the only one brave enough to handle it, trucked his way through 176 hours of drive time across 7,634 miles around the United States. Our prayer life

grew with every steep descent, especially those 10% grades down mountain roads.

RV life is not for us. It took exactly one night to realize that. Not to mention that our rental came with free cockroaches, which was not advertised in the listing.

But if the driving didn't break us, the sewage situation nearly did. Here's a tip: when emptying the waste tank, do not, under any circumstances, let the entire hose slip down the dump station drain hole. Trust me, what comes back out is not what you want to be dealing with. Also, five people in one RV? You can do the math.

Oh, and they try to sell you on the idea that you can cook and use the bathroom while driving for efficiency. Tell that to the burn on my arm from trying to cook while literally surfing inside a moving house. And let's just say, one small pothole while using the toilet, and you're no longer on it. Lesson learned.

But despite bumped heads and other sound effects that we won't

speak of, there were moments that made it all worth it. We stood beneath the St. Louis Arch, gazed up at Mount Rushmore, explored the vast beauty of Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Teton and the Grand Canyon. Ryan summed it up best when he said, "There's nothing quite like standing at the base of Half Dome or looking over the canyon and experiencing the stillness." We took breaks just to breathe, to soak in the silence and take in all the beautiful sunsets.

This trip was exhausting, uncomfortable, and at times, outright miserable. But it was also unforgettable.

The bumps, bruises and burns will fade, but the memories will last forever. If there's one thing this trip taught me, it's don't wait. If there's something you've been putting off, do it now. Take the trip, make the call, chase the squirrels. Time is not promised and regrets don't make great souvenirs. ☹️



Hey, readers! Is there a particular subject that you would like me to write a commentary about? → Tell me, via email, at cindy@akersmediagroup.com.



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